



RESIDENTS HANDBOOK

DAYTIME CONTACT:

0191 3881111

0800 0432642

OUT OF HOURS CONTACT

(EMERGENCY NO. GENTOO 0191 5255000)

Resident



Approved

**This handbook is the property of
Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes
Association, and should remain in the
home at all times.**

**Please call the Customer Service Team
if you lose or damage it.**

If you would like this document in another
language or format, or if you require the services
of an interpreter please contact us on
0800 0432642

CONTENTS

1. WHO ARE WE?	<i>Page</i>
OUR HISTORY	1
OUR CORE AIMS	3
WHERE ARE OUR HOMES?	4
MANAGED HOMES	4
OUR HEAD OFFICE	5
THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	6
2. YOUR TERMS OF OCCUPANCY	
LETTER OF APPOINTMENT	7
THE ASSOCIATIONS OBLIGATIONS	7
YOUR OBLIGATIONS	8
TERMINATING YOUR APPOINTMENT	9
3. WEEKLY CHARGE	
THE WEEKLY CHARGE	11
HOW WE SET YOUR MAINTENANCE CONTRIBUTION	11
WATER RATES	12
CONTENTS INSURANCE CHARGES	13
SUPPORT CHARGES	13
HELP WITH PAYING YOUR WEEKLY CHARGE	13
HOW TO PAY YOUR WEEKLY CHARGE	15
REVIEWING YOUR WEEKLY CHARGE	17
ARREARS	17
QUARTERLY STATEMENTS	18
4. REPAIRS	
WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REPAIRS?	19
RECHARGEABLE REPAIRS MENU OF CHARGES	22
WHO DOES THE REPAIRS?	22
PAINTING & DECORATING	23
HOW TO REPORT REPAIRS	23

REPAIR APPOINTMENTS	24
EMERGENCY REPAIRS OUTSIDE OFFICE HOURS	24
WHEN WILL THE REPAIR BE DONE?	26
URGENT REPAIRS	26
ROUTINE REPAIRS	27
PLANNED MAINTENANCE	28
DAMAGE TO DECORATIONS	29
MONITORING THE REPAIRS SERVICE	29
GAS SAFETY	30
GAS LEAKS	31
ELECTRICITY	32
WATER AND BURST PIPES	32
DOMESTIC HOT WATER HYGIENE	33

5. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

HOW TO BE INVOLVED	35
RESIDENT FORUM	36
SOCIAL WELFARE FUND	37

6. LIVING IN YOUR HOME

COUNCIL TAX	39
AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS	39
CENTRAL WARDEN CONTROL SYSTEM	39
PENDANTS	40
SMOKE ALARMS	40
HOME SECURITY	41
BOGUS CALLERS	42
ELDER ABUSE	43
KEEPING WARM	44
ENERGY SAVING TIPS	45
OPERATING YOUR CENTRAL HEATING SYSTEM	46
LEAVING YOUR HOME EMPTY IN COLD WEATHER	47
GAS CENTRAL HEATING	47
FIRE	48
HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF FIRE IN YOUR HOME	49

CONDENSATION	51
IMPROVEMENTS AND ALTERATIONS	53
PORCHES, SHEDS AND GREENHOUSES	54
GARDENS	55
PESTS	55
CAR PARKING	55
CARAVANS, MOTOR HOMES AND COMMERCIAL VEHICLES	56
NEIGHBOUR DISPUTES & ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR HARASSMENT	56
PETS	57
HOUSEHOLD RUBBISH	58
CONCESSIONARY TELEVISION LICENCES	58
ACCESS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION	59
RIGHT TO BUY	59
COMPLAINTS	60
COMPENSATION	60
7. USEFUL CONTACTS	61

1. WHO ARE WE?

● OUR HISTORY

Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association is one of the largest Almshouse Charities in the Country. It was established in 1898 by Joseph Hopper, a miner and lay preacher from the Wrekenton area of Gateshead, who believed that a man who has served in the pits from the age of 12 to 65 or beyond, deserved better than to be evicted from his tied house when he retired. There were no council houses in those days, so for many, the only alternative was the workhouse, many of which were single sex and did not permit man and wife to live together in retirement.

He travelled the North East trying desperately to get support for his movement, and as a result of his tireless commitment to the workers in the Durham coalmining industry, he was able to persuade collieries to agree to a weekly levy.

Sadly, Joseph Hopper died in 1909 and did not see the growth of the movement he started. However, his tireless energy and dedicated commitment were best summed up by Lord Joicey who described the Association as “the greatest philanthropic scheme by a body of workmen anywhere in the world.”

In the period from 1910 to 1957, 1600 homes were built with money raised by a weekly levy from the 200,000 serving workmen in the 200 pits. Until the mid 60's, every home was provided free of charge. However, the sad demise of a once great coalfield also spelt the end of free housing provision, and a small weekly charge was introduced for the first time on residents living in areas where the collieries had closed and the income dried up.

By 1980 only 18 collieries remained employing less than 20,000 men, less than 10% of its former size. In the same year, a survey was carried out which showed that over 200 homes had no inside toilet or bathroom facilities and expenditure of 4 to 5 million pounds was needed to bring the homes up to a decent standard.

In 1981 the Association registered with the Housing Corporation (now the Homes and Communities Agency), the Government appointed body which funds and oversees the activities of Housing Associations. With the aid of grants, all of our older homes have now been modernised and several hundred new bungalows and flats have been built.

Now that the Association is over one hundred years old, we are very proud of our history and the care that we have provided over the last century. Even though the pits have all gone, we continue to move from strength to strength and look forward to providing quality homes and high standards of service to older people.

● OUR CORE AIMS



To place residents at the heart of everything we do and provide an appropriate high quality and continually improving service.



To improve the condition and marketability of existing homes within a broader asset management strategy.



To increase the balance of two bedroom stock and deliver quality, well designed and energy efficient homes.



To maintain effective, efficient and well motivated Trustees, Staff and Volunteers.



To ensure the Association is viable, well managed and provides equal opportunities for all.



To provide assistance in the development and management of housing schemes provided by other charities.

● **WHERE ARE OUR HOMES?**

The Association has homes in four different local authority areas throughout County Durham and Tyne & Wear. A list of all of the locations of our homes can be obtained by calling our Customer Service Team on 08000 432642 or 0191 3881111. Details can also be obtained from our website www.damha.org.uk.

● **MANAGED HOMES**

One of our Core Aims is to assist other North East charities in the management and development of almshouses.

We currently provide services to the following charities:-

Hartlepoons War Memorial and
Crosby Homes - 24 homes in Hartlepool

Brandon Aged Persons Homes - 12 homes in Brandon

Jacob Wright Cottages - 5 homes in Evenwood

Hunter Memorial Homes Trust - 10 homes in Morpeth

William Russell Bequest - 7 homes in Brancepeth

Vesper House Trust - 5 homes in Seaton
Carew

● OUR HEAD OFFICE

The day to day business of the Association is carried out by staff based at our office in Chester le Street, County Durham.



The full postal address of our head office is:

PO Box 31
The Grove
168 Front Street
Chester le Street
Co Durham
DH3 3YH

We can be contacted by telephone, fax or e-mail as follows:

Main Switchboard	0191 388 1111
Customer Freephone	08000 432642
Fax Number	0191 388 2838
E Mail	info@damha.org.uk
Website	www.damha.org.uk

Our normal hours of business are Monday – Friday: 9.00 am to 4.30 pm

A leaflet explaining who does what at our Office is available to make it easier for you to know who to ask for if you need to contact us with a query. All residents should have been supplied with a copy when they moved into their home, further copies are available from our office on request.

● **THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The Association is controlled by a body of Trustees who form the Executive Committee. They are all voluntary members who meet regularly to establish policies and give direction to staff.

The Executive Committee is made up of people from within the mining industry, residents of the Association and others with special expertise in the varied aspects of running the business e.g. finance, housing management, development, personnel and social work.

Trustees receive no payment for their services except for out of pocket expenses.

A list of the names of current Trustees can be obtained from the office.

2. YOUR TERMS OF OCCUPANCY

● LETTER OF APPOINTMENT

You will have received a copy of the Letter of Appointment which you signed when you were allocated the home.

This letter provides you with a licence to occupy your home, and is not a tenancy agreement. As a beneficiary of an almshouse charity you are not a tenant within the normal legal meaning of the word. However the Association cannot ask you to leave your home, or set aside an appointment, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as those outlined below:

- a) In the case of your serious misconduct or anti social behaviour.
- b) Where there is a breach of the terms of the Letter of Appointment (for example a failure to pay your weekly charge).
- c) In the event of prolonged ill-health where it may be necessary to seek alternative accommodation. In this case, we will consult with your local Social Services or GP, as well as your next of kin etc., in order to make the most suitable arrangements for your rehousing.

Where it becomes necessary to set aside an appointment, we will give you at least four weeks notice in writing of our intentions.

● THE ASSOCIATION'S OBLIGATIONS

As laid out in the Letter of Appointment these are as follows:

- To keep the property, including external decorations, in good repair

- Not to interfere with your occupation of the dwelling except where access is required for repairs
- To give you four weeks notice of any increase in your weekly maintenance contribution.
- To provide information to, and consult with you on matters of housing management
- To notify you of any changes in the terms of your appointment
- To allow you reasonable access to personal information held by the Association.



● YOUR OBLIGATIONS

As laid out in your Letter of Appointment these are as follows:

- To pay the weekly maintenance contribution and other charges when due
- To occupy the property as your main residence and in a reasonable manner so that you or your invited visitors do not cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or other members of the public

- To keep the internal decoration and garden(s) of the property where it is the resident's responsibility in good condition
- To give access to the Association's staff, agents or contractors at all reasonable hours to allow them to carry out repairs and inspections
- Not to allow members of family other than your spouse, to live in the property without the prior written permission of the Association
- Not to make alterations to the property without written consent of the Association
- To give the Association four weeks notice to vacate the dwelling and to leave the property and gardens in good condition

● **TERMINATING YOUR APPOINTMENT**

If you decide to move to another property, you must advise your Area Housing Officer as soon as possible. You will be sent a Termination Notice to fill in and return. Under the terms of your Letter of Appointment you are required to give the Association at least four weeks notice of your intention to leave.

You will be advised of any outstanding weekly charges payable as soon as possible.

Before you move, you should contact your gas and electric suppliers to arrange for final meter readings.

Any furniture, carpets or personal belongings which you leave in the property will be disposed of and the Association reserves the right to recharge you for clearing the premises.

The keys to your home should be brought to the office. Alternatively if there is a Residents Representative at your scheme the keys may be left with them. Please notify the office when this has been done – **PLEASE DO NOT PUT THEM IN THE POST.**

3. WEEKLY CHARGE

● THE WEEKLY CHARGE

Depending upon the type of property you live in, the weekly charge that you pay us may include:

- Maintenance contribution
- Water and sewerage charges or rates
- Service charges
- Contents insurance
- Support Charges

For almshouse residents, a maintenance contribution is payable as opposed to rent. It contributes towards the running costs of the Association which include:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Repayment of loans
- Insurance of buildings
- Provision of funds for future major repairs and renewals
- Staffing Costs

● HOW WE SET YOUR MAINTENANCE CONTRIBUTION

The level of maintenance contribution payable in respect of each of our homes is set according to a Government formula which is applicable to all housing associations.

A similar formula is also used by local authorities in order to calculate their council house rents.

These formulas are intended to ensure that all housing association charges:

- Reflect the size, location and condition of every home
- Become similar for properties of a similar size, location and condition regardless of who the landlord is
- Are fairer and less confusing
- Remain affordable in the future

The weekly charges for most of our homes have been calculated with reference to this formula. This means that the charge for your home, will reflect both the property's value and the average income of people living in the same county.

Following a change in Government funding regime, some of our newer homes are subject to "affordable rent" which is calculated at 80% of the local open market rent for that particular area.

● **WATER RATES**

The Association pays the money due in respect of water rates and sewerage charges for our older properties in advance to the appropriate water company on your behalf.

These rates are then collected each week from you along with the weekly maintenance contribution.

Any increased charges in water rates payable will be notified to you separately in March of each year.

Where your property has a water meter fitted, you are responsible for payment direct to the water provider.

● **CONTENTS INSURANCE CHARGES**

Although the Association insures all of its buildings and fixtures and fittings, you are responsible for insuring your own contents.

The Association has negotiated an arrangement with an insurance company, whereby residents can have their contents insured on a new for old basis. Payment for this service can be made to the Association weekly in addition to the maintenance contribution charge. The scheme itself offers good value for money and the majority of our residents have taken advantage of it. Please note that if you are in arrears with your payments then the contents insurance will be void.

Further details can be obtained from your Area Housing Officer or by telephoning our Finance section at head office.

If you have a key safe fitted to the exterior of your home, or are away from your home for more than 30 days, you must inform our finance section.

● **SUPPORT CHARGES**

Housing related support includes help provided by our Concierge staff in Sheltered Schemes and Community Alarm services.

● **HELP WITH PAYING YOUR WEEKLY CHARGE**

● **Housing Benefit**

Many residents are entitled to receive Housing Benefit if they do not have sufficient income to pay the maintenance contribution. Often residents do not claim Housing Benefit even though they are entitled to do so.

The government is changing the way you claim help with your housing costs. If you are claiming Universal Credit, your housing benefit forms part of the claim and will be paid directly to you on a monthly basis. It is then your responsibility to make sure you pay your full maintenance contribution to us.

For those residents not in receipt of Universal Credit, your local council will continue to deal with claims for Housing Benefit. As part of this process the Housing Benefit Department will need to see **ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS** for proof of your identity, income and licence to occupy each time your claim is reassessed.

IF YOU DO NOT PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION EACH TIME YOU COMPLETE A HOUSING BENEFIT FORM, YOUR CLAIM WILL NOT BE PROCESSED AND YOU MAY LOSE SOME OF YOUR ENTITLEMENT TO BENEFIT.

Where payment of Housing Benefit is through your local council you will have the option to have it paid direct to the Association. Unfortunately this is not possible for those in receipt of Universal Credit.

If you are in any doubt whatsoever about your Housing Benefit entitlement, or how to claim help with your housing costs then please ask one of our Area Housing Officers to visit. They will be pleased to assist you confidentially, in your own home so as to ensure you obtain all the benefits to which you are entitled.

If you are having any difficulty in paying your maintenance contribution, it is vitally important that you contact head office as early as possible.

● **Welfare Benefits**

In addition to Housing Benefit, staff can give confidential advice in your own home on how to obtain help with other

benefits, e.g. Universal Credit, Council Tax, Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Pension Credit etc.

● **HOW TO PAY YOUR WEEKLY CHARGE**

The total amount payable to the Association is charged weekly in advance on the Monday of each week. It can be paid either weekly or monthly by prior arrangement with the Association as follows:

● **Payment Card**

For those residents who wish to pay **weekly**, we can supply you with a plastic Payment Card. You can use your Payment Card to pay your weekly charge at any Post Office or Paypoint outlet. Paypoints can be found in certain supermarkets, newsagents and petrol stations, further details of these locations can be obtained from our Customer Services Team. The payment card is not a credit card and has no monetary value but simply tells us who you are so that we can credit your account accurately. There is no charge for using the Payment Card to make a payment. You simply hand your card along with your payment to the cashier and tell them how much you are going to pay. Each time you make a payment you will get a receipt so that you have a record of your payment.

● **Direct Debit**

The Association also provides a facility for residents to pay their charge **monthly** direct from their bank account. This method involves a payment being made once each calendar month, or 12 times each year by Direct Debit.

Once the necessary bank mandate has been signed, the monthly payment can be amended automatically by the Association following agreement with individual residents without the need to issue new forms each year.

Further details of the above methods of payment can be obtained from the Finance section at the Association's office.

● **Postal Payments**

Payments can also be made by post direct to the Association's office. In this case payments should be made by cheque which should be crossed and made payable to Durham Aged Mineworkers Homes Association with the name and address and rent reference of the account to which the payment relates written clearly on the back. **NEVER SEND CASH THROUGH THE POST.**

● **Website**

You can now pay your Weekly Charges online by using your debit card and your Payment Card you have received from ourselves.

This is collected via our collecting agents, Allpay, who currently collect all the payment information for those paying at the Post Office or by Direct Debit

To make a payment, please go to www.allpay.net and follow the link marked 'MAKE A PAYMENT'.

● **Telephone Payments**

Payments can be made by debit card over the phone via our collection agents Allpay.net. This is an automated system and you will require your payment card to use this method.

To make a payment please call 0844 5578321 and follow the instructions.

Alternatively you can call our office and make a payment with your debit card.



- **REVIEWING YOUR WEEKLY CHARGES**

Maintenance contributions and service charge are normally reviewed each year around April time. You will be given at least four weeks notice in writing of any increase in your maintenance contribution. Increases in the water and sewerage charges, over which we have no control, will come into effect immediately, whenever possible however we will endeavour to give you at least two weeks notice of such increases.

- **ARREARS**

It is your responsibility to pay the maintenance contribution and other weekly charges which are due to the Association.

It is our policy to respond quickly to arrears, so that people who may be having difficulties can receive advice and assurance before the debt grows too large.

If you have any difficulty in paying your weekly charge it is very important that you contact your housing officer as soon as possible, they can visit you in order to discuss the situation in the privacy of your home.

Remember that the non-payment of your weekly charge is a breach of the terms of your Letter of Appointment and ultimately could result in you losing your home.

Please note that if you are in arrears with your payments then the contents insurance will be void.

If you require a copy of our arrears policy please contact your Area Housing Officer.

● **QUARTERLY STATEMENTS**

We will provide you with a statement of your account with us on a quarterly basis.

This is simply a statement of your account and not a bill, invoice or request for payment. It shows the date and amount of any payments made either by yourself or in respect of Housing Benefit payable by your local council, as well as a brief description of the payment type e.g. Housing Benefit, swipe card posting (payment made at the Post Office or other outlet using your payment card). You should use this statement in order to check the payments made by yourself against the receipts that you have been given from the Post Office or your bank statement if you pay by Direct Debit. If there are any payments made by yourself within the dates of the statement which are not shown then please let us know so we can check if the payment has reached us. It may be that the payment has reached us a little late and will appear on the next statement, but it is always easier for us to find any errors if we are informed of them straight away rather than at a later date.

If you have any queries regarding your Statement please contact the Finance section at the Association's office.

4. REPAIRS

● WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REPAIRS?

The table below shows which repairs the Association is responsible for, and which the resident is responsible for

REPAIRING RESPONSIBILITIES			
Bathroom – Who is responsible?			
	Us	You	Comments
Bath	✓		
Shower unit	✓		If supplied
Toilet seat	✓		
Wash basin	✓		
Taps	✓		
Tap washers	✓		
Plugs and chains	✓		
Flooring	✓		Unless residents own
Tiles	✓		
Central Heating – Who is responsible?			
Electric storage systems	✓		
Fireplace tiles	✓		
Gas-fired systems with radiators	✓		
Any system fitted by you	✓		Unless within 1st 12 months
Solid fuel appliance	✓		
Chimney sweeping	✓		
Doors – Who is responsible?			
Door bell	✓		Unless fitted by you
Door chain	✓		
Door name plate	✓		
Glass in door or screen	✓		
Inside doors	✓		
Handles, latches etc to inside doors	✓		
Keys	✓		
All locks	✓		
Outside doors	✓		

Kitchens – Who is responsible?			
	Us	You	Comments
Cooker		✓	Unless provided by Association
Cooker socket	✓		
Kitchen units	✓		
Sink bowl and drainer	✓		
Tiled splash back	✓		
Taps	✓		
Tap washers	✓		
Plugs and chains	✓		
Electrics – Who is responsible?			
Wiring sockets and switches	✓		
Light bulbs		✓	
Fluorescent tubes and starter	✓		
Bathroom flush lights	✓		
External security lights	✓		
Plumbing – Who is responsible?			
Blocked sink, wash basin, bath	✓		
Domestic cold water supply	✓		
Downpipes (rain and soil)	✓		
Drains	✓		
Gutters	✓		
Hot water supply	✓		
Sink plugs and chains	✓		
Washing machine fittings		✓	
Structure – Who is responsible?			
Ceilings	✓		Unless decorative
Damp proof course	✓		
Floors	✓		
Outside woodwork	✓		
Skirting boards	✓		
Stairs (inside)	✓		
Steps to entrances	✓		
Walls	✓		

Windows – Who is responsible?			
	Us	You	Comments
Glass in windows	✓		
Frames and fittings	✓		
Window locks	✓		
OTHER – Who is responsible?			
Clothes line posts	✓		
Posts and wires marking boundary	✓		
Fences between gardens	✓		Unless erected by resident
Footpaths	✓		Unless adopted by Local Authority
Gates	✓		Unless erected by resident
Outside decoration	✓		
Sheds	✓		Unless erected by Resident
Smoke alarms	✓		
Gardens		✓	Unless DAMHA adopted schemes
Internal Decoration		✓	
TV Aerials		✓	
Path Clearing e.g. Snow/Leaves		✓	
Communal TV Aerials	✓		
Carbon Monoxide Detectors		✓	Unless provided by the Association
Telephone Sockets – main		✓	
Telephone Sockets – extentions	✓		Only where originally provided by DAMHA

IMPORTANT

If any items are damaged by you, your family or guests or because you have misused them, you will be recharged for any repairs or replacements.

Similarly, when moving out, you or your family must ensure that your property, garden and yard are all fully cleared.

If you would like a copy of our Rechargeable Repairs Policy please contact your Area Housing Officer.

RECHARGEABLE REPAIRS MENU OF CHARGES (inclusive of VAT)

REPAIR	TOTAL COST
Gain entry (labour only)	£60.00
Lock change (per lock)	£70.00
Replacement external door (Russell type)	£700.00
Replacement external door (UPVC)	£450.00
Internal door	£100.00
New wash hand basin	£85.00
New bath	£475.00
Worktops	£90.00 per metre
Double glazed units	Price according to size - £100.00 minimum
Replacement electric sockets/light switches	£49.00
Unblocking drains	£106.00
Keys to window locks	£25.00 per window
Removal of shed	£180.00
Removal of greenhouse	£336.00
Abortive call for electrical works	£50.00
House clearance	Minimum charge of £175.00
Charge for call outs outside office hours	£50.00

● **WHO DOES THE REPAIRS?**

We use a network of mainly small, locally based contractors to carry out the work. The service they provide is excellent and they are regularly monitored to ensure that high standards are maintained.

The list of contractors is reviewed each year by the Committee and any contractor who has not performed in a satisfactory manner in the opinion of the Committee is removed from the list.

● **PAINTING AND DECORATING**

We will repaint the timber on the outside of your home every eight years. You will be notified well in advance before work starts, and it is important that you or a neighbour or friend are at the home at the time to ensure that windows and doors are open to allow the timber to be painted properly.

You are responsible for keeping your own internal decoration in good order. Never paint any of the external brickwork or windowsills, including the brickwork inside glazed screens. It is very difficult and expensive to remove and you will be recharged for this cost.

● **HOW TO REPORT REPAIRS**

If we are responsible for the repair, it is important that you notify us as soon as possible.

You can report repairs by:

- Writing to the Head Office
- Telephoning Freephone 08000 432642
- Calling into the office
- Contacting your Residents Representative
- E-mail: info@damha.org.uk
- Text messaging on 0191 5805802
- Website on www.damha.org.uk
- Ring Gentoo, out of hours and weekends (see over)

Please try to provide as much information as you can as this enables us to order the correct work.

● REPAIR APPOINTMENTS

If the repair is inside your home, please tell us when it is convenient for a contractor to call.

Most residents have given permission for the Association to inform the maintenance contractors of their home telephone number. This will enable the contractor to telephone you directly and make an appointment to carry out the repair. This means that you will not be sitting in waiting for the repair to be carried out, and it also cuts down on the number of wasted calls by contractors, which can be an unnecessary drain on the maintenance budget.

If you have not given permission for your telephone number to be given out on the works order issued to contractors, and would like to be included in this Appointment System, please contact our Customer Service Team.

If a contractor calls and you are out, he will leave a card with the telephone number on. You can then make an appointment for him to return at a convenient time.

If you agree an appointment time and you fail to keep the appointment, you may be recharged for an abortive visit.

● EMERGENCY REPAIRS OUTSIDE OFFICE HOURS

If an emergency occurs outside of office hours, contact:

Gentoo on 0191 5255000.

Please do not abuse this system as emergency call outs are very expensive. The Association will recharge residents who abuse the Emergency Repairs System. The charge will be the difference in the cost between a repair carried out outside of normal office hours and one carried out within normal office hours.

A copy of the recharge policy can be sent out on request.

For guidance, an emergency is any defect which puts the health, safety or security of the resident or a member of the public at immediate risk, or which seriously affects the structure of the building. Examples are:

- Total loss of water
- Burst water main
- Flooding
- Severe storm damage
- Total loss of electricity supply
- Major fault with electricity supply
- Unsafe electricity fittings
- Breaches of security to outside doors and windows
- Total loss of gas supply
- Gas leak
- Blocked flue
- Blocked drains, soil pipe or WC
- Heating loss
- Hot water loss
- Failure of lift
- Fire damage
- Failure of entry phone

● WHEN WILL THE REPAIR BE DONE?

Repairs are put into three categories depending upon their nature and urgency:

- Emergency repairs (see previous page)
- Urgent repairs (see examples below)
- Routine repairs (see examples opposite)

● URGENT REPAIRS



Some examples of urgent repairs are:

- Plumbing leaks/blocked waste
- Blocked, sinks, basins, bath
- Defective cistern or overflow
- Heating or hot water faults
- Minor electrical faults
- Roof leaks

- Security of internal doors and windows
- Unsafe flooring
- Faulty communal TV aerial
- Toilet seats

● **ROUTINE REPAIRS**

Some examples of routine repairs are:

- General joinery repairs
- Repairs to door, windows and floors
- Repairs to external walls, fences and paths
- Repairs to walls, brickwork and slates/tiles
- Repairs/clearing of gutters and downpipes
- Repairs to kitchen fittings
- Replacement sink/basin plugs
- Severe dampness
- Graffiti removal (unless offensive)
- Faulty extractor fan/passivent fan
- Repairs to plaster work
- Minor plumbing repairs – e.g. dripping taps
- Repairs to tiling
- Easing doors and windows
- Security lights
- Other minor “day-to-day” repairs/replacement

In the interests of cost effectiveness, routine repairs are usually put into batches and given to one contractor to carry out several repairs in one area.

The table below shows how we will strive to provide your repairs service.

REPAIR CATEGORY	TARGET TIME
Emergencies	24 hours
Urgent	4 working days
Routine	21 working days

Working days do not include Saturdays, Sundays or Statutory Holidays.

With some emergency repairs, the property will be made safe within 24 hours and the final repair carried out soon afterwards.

For example, a broken window will be boarded up, after which it may take a few days to have a new double glazed unit made and fitted.

Please note (with the exception of emergency repairs reported via Gentoo), we will not accept responsibility for a bill if you instruct a contractor to carry out work without first telling us of the problem.

● **PLANNED MAINTENANCE**

Apart from responding to day-to-day repairs, each year, we will carry out certain repairs, replacements and improvements on a planned basis. This involves inspecting properties periodically so we are always aware of the condition of our stock enabling us to identify what is required and put it into a programme.

Some examples of this type of work are:

- Painting the outside of your home every eight years
- Replacing windows and external doors
- Renewing kitchen units and bathroom suites
- Re-roofing
- Replacing central heating boilers.

You will be informed well in advance before any planned work starts.

● **DAMAGE TO DECORATIONS**

Occasionally, some types of repair will cause substantial damage to your decorations. If this occurs, we will either:

- Arrange for a contractor to redecorate
- If you wish to redecorate yourself, we will issue decoration vouchers, or provide a paint pack whichever you prefer.

● **MONITORING THE REPAIRS SERVICE**

We aim to provide you with a first-class repairs service so it is important that we monitor the performance of the contractors who carry out the work.

We do this by:

- Inspecting a random sample of the completed jobs to ensure that standards are maintained
- Checking that each job has been carried out in the specified time
- Asking a random selection of residents to complete a Repairs Satisfaction Survey

These surveys are very important, as they enable us to constantly monitor not only the performance of individual contractors, but what you, the residents generally think about the service we provide.

● **GAS SAFETY**

Every year, people die from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by faulty or poorly maintained gas appliances. To safeguard our residents, we treat gas safety with the utmost importance. If your Carbon Monoxide Detector is bleeping intermittently please contact us to rectify the fault. If your Carbon Monoxide Detector is sounding in a continuous tone, then you must vacate the property as well as contacting us.

The Association have a legal obligation to carry out an annual service on all gas fires and central heating boilers and issue you with a copy of the Gas Safety Certificate.

You will be notified in advance of the date when your gas service will be carried out. Failure to comply will result in your gas supply being temporarily suspended to ensure your safety.

The smoke detector in your home will be cleaned at the same time.

A detailed copy of our Gas Safety Policy can be sent out on request.

Cookers – any repairs to your gas cooker are your responsibility. If you change from a gas cooker to an electric cooker please let us know immediately so that we can remove the bayonet fitting and cap off the redundant pipe.

Air vents for the central heating system will be located in external and internal doors, or in floors or walls. **NEVER block these vents, as the ventilation is vital to the safe operation of the heating system.**

Before any vacant property is relet, a gas check will be carried out and the new residents will receive the same certificate.

Never allow anyone to sleep in the living room where there is a gas fire.

● GAS LEAKS



If you think you can smell gas:

- **DO NOT** turn electric switches on or off
- **DO NOT** smoke
- **DO NOT** use any naked flames
- **DO** turn off the gas supply at the meter
- **DO** open all doors and windows to get rid of the gas
- **DO** call the GAS EMERGENCY NUMBER free on **0800 111 999**
- **DO** inform the Association as soon as possible

● **ELECTRICITY**

If you have an electrical emergency such as a total power failure, first of all, check with your neighbours because there may be a power cut affecting a number of properties in your area.

If there is a power cut please telephone **105**.

For other electrical emergencies, either ring head office or use the Emergency Repairs procedures.



● **WATER AND BURST PIPES**

If you have a burst pipe, blocked drain or the water supply fails for some reason, ring the Association as soon as possible. If the problem occurs outside of office hours, use the Emergency Repairs procedures or call Northumbrian Water Emergency Line on 0345 7171100.

If you are unlucky enough to have a burst pipe, follow these procedures:

- Turn the water off at the stop cock or the water stop switch, if fitted
- Turn on all of your taps to drain the water system as quickly as possible
- Try to find out where the water is coming from and notify the Association as soon as possible
- If out of hours, use the Emergency Repairs procedures
- If water has been leaking through a light on the ceiling, a light switch or electric socket **DO NOT SWITCH IT ON**

● **DOMESTIC HOT WATER HYGIENE**

To avoid a build up of bacteria in your showerhead, showers should be operated for a minimum of 10 minutes each week.

Clean your showerhead regularly and occasionally disinfect using a sterilising solution.

Carrying out this routine will prevent a build up of bacteria in the shower.

5. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

Our Executive Committee has clearly set out its commitment to resident involvement by setting one of their core aims as being

“To place residents at the heart of everything we do to provide an appropriate high quality and continually improving service.”

● HOW TO BE INVOLVED

Below is a list of the ways in which you can be involved and have your say in the services we provide.

It is designed to let you choose how you want to be involved. You may only wish to comment when there is a local issue particular to you, or you may wish to be more involved in how the organisation is managed.

Information – we aim to provide good quality information on all matters, which affect you, our customers.

This can be done through:

- Information leaflets
- Resident Handbook
- Newsletter
- Resident Forum
- Individual Letters
- Area Meetings
- Website
- Annual Performance Information

Consultation – providing information to you and asking for your comments. This can be done through:

- Focus Groups
- Surveys
- Area Meetings
- Individual Home Visits
- Residents Forum
- Comments Box in Office & Sheltered Schemes

Participation – involving you in setting priorities and improving services:

- Focus Groups
- Sub Committee Membership
- Scrutiny Panel Membership
- Residents Forum
- Area Meetings
- Residents Reading Panel
- Gardening Club Membership

If you would like more information about any of the ways you can be involved in the management of your home, please contact our Customer Service Team.

● **RESIDENTS FORUM**

Residents from each group of our homes are invited to elect a Residents Representative to act on their behalf. All Representatives are elected for a period of three years.

Once elected, Residents Representatives attend the Association's Residents Forum which meets three times each year to discuss both local and general issues with Committee members and staff. As such the Forum forms a fundamental part of the Association's consultation policy.

● **SOCIAL WELFARE FUND**

Durham Aged Mineworkers Homes Social Welfare Fund was established to promote and facilitate social and welfare activities amongst the residents of Durham Aged Mineworkers Homes Association.

The fund is supported by various donations and by our annual Christmas Draw.

Any group of residents wishing to apply for a donation towards the cost of any social activity, e.g. coach trip, party etc., that they are organising, should request a donation form from our office.

6. LIVING IN YOUR HOME

This section attempts to address many of the questions, which may arise while you are living in one of our homes.



● COUNCIL TAX

Please be aware you are responsible for the Council Tax for your home from the start of your Letter of Appointment.

● AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS

Many of the people we re-house are disabled or become disabled whilst living in the home.

Where residents are having particular problems, we will ask a member of staff from the Adult Social Care Team to visit and make recommendations for adaptations to the home or to provide aids to make life easier.

If you are having any difficulties in coping in your home, please contact the Customer Service Team.

A contact number for the Adult Social Care Team for your area can be found on Page 63 of this handbook.

● CENTRAL WARDEN CONTROL SYSTEM

All of our homes can be linked to a central warden control system subject to the presence of an active telephone line. These systems ensure that emergencies can be dealt with by staff in a control room 24 hours a day. Mobile wardens can also be sent out to investigate emergency calls where necessary.

Please ensure that you keep the control centre staff informed of any changes in your personal information e.g. the address and telephone number of your next of kin.

NEVER tie up the pull cords or place furniture in front of them as this may prevent you from summoning help in an emergency situation.

Residents, other than those in Sheltered flats can choose whether they wish to be linked to the central warden control system. For further information, and associated costs please contact your local authority.

● **PENDANTS**

For residents who are less mobile, pendants are available that can be worn around the neck or on the wrist, and can alert the central warden control staff by the push of a button.

If you feel that you need a pendant, please contact your Warden Call provider.

● **SMOKE ALARMS**

All of our homes have a smoke detector fitted.

The smoke detectors are checked by the Association, on an annual basis to ensure their continued effectiveness. This will be carried out at the same time as the gas service. For those with solid fuel central heating, a separate arrangement will be made. We will notify you by letter in advance before this is carried out. Please try to be available or make alternative arrangements, as wasted calls are expensive.

If your smoke detector activates please follow the procedure in case of fire set out in the section entitled “FIRE” - UNLESS YOU ARE CERTAIN THAT IT IS A FALSE ALARM.

NEVER COVER UP OR TAMPER WITH YOUR SMOKE ALARM.

If you are linked to a central warden control system then your smoke alarm can be linked to them. Please contact your provider for more details.

● HOME SECURITY



Please be on your guard against opportunist thieves and bogus callers.

DO keep your doors locked at all times

DO keep your windows locked at night and when you are not at home

DO use your door chain or door guard, especially at night

DO draw your curtains at night and leave at least one light on if you go out

DO NOT allow strangers into your home without identity

DO NOT keep large amounts of cash in the house

It is a good idea to have bedside or standard lamps operating from time switches, especially if you go away on holiday. These can be bought from most DIY stores.

● **BOGUS CALLERS**

Most callers to your home are probably quite genuine, but some are not. Sadly, many of our residents over the years have been robbed by bogus callers who may be smartly dressed and claim to be from the council, gas, electricity or water companies, or some other organisation.

Genuine callers will usually make an appointment first and will carry identification with their photograph on. They will not mind if you keep the door on the chain and ask to see their identity card before you let them in. If you are still unsure, ask the caller to come back later when someone can be with you.

Report suspicious callers to your central warden control, local police on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.



Bogus callers sometimes work in pairs. Beware of one distracting you so the other one can steal property. If you have any suspicions at all, do not let them in. If you are concerned, ring the police on 999 and tell them what has happened.

If a caller says they are from the Association they will have an identity card, but you can also double-check this by looking

at The Staff Identification Leaflet, which has individual staff photographs.

Any contractor working on behalf of the Association will be able to produce documents confirming this. Please check with our Customer Services Team if you are unsure of any caller.

Remember – **IF IN DOUBT – KEEP THEM OUT**

● **ELDER ABUSE**

Sadly up to 1 in 20 older people are thought to be victims of some kind of abuse.

The Association is committed to helping awareness of elder abuse – it happens and it is not acceptable.

Abuse takes many forms.

If someone you should be able to trust – whether family, friend, volunteer or paid worker – threatens, hurts or exploits you this is abuse.

So what types of abuse are there?

- Physical – Hitting or punching or giving you medicines you don't need.
- Financial – Stealing your money or making you change your Will.
- Emotional – Calling you names or threatening something that matters to you.
- Sexual – Contact you don't want, including sexual conversations you don't want.
- Neglect – Not providing the support you need.

So who abuses?

Anyone! But we know about abuse from:

- A relative
- A friend or neighbour
- A careworker – in your house or in a care home
- A volunteer, including from community groups and churches
- A Nurse
- A Doctor

So where does it happen?

Anywhere! But we know about abuse:

- In your home
- In hospitals
- In care homes
- In sheltered housing
- In day centres

If you are worried about something that is happening to you or someone you know then you can seek free confidential advice from the national Action on Elder Abuse helpline on 080 8808 8141.

If your concerns involve an employee of the Association then you should also contact us direct. Your local Adult Care Team also has responsibilities for the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse. (See contacts on Page 63).

● KEEPING WARM

All homes have central heating and it is vitally important that you keep your home warm particularly during the winter

months, as hypothermia is a danger to everyone, particularly older people.

Eat at least one hot meal a day. If you have any elderly or infirm neighbours, try and look in on them as much as possible, especially if they have no family or other regular visitors who live close by.

● **ENERGY SAVING TIPS**

■ **Central Heating**

If you feel that your home is too warm, turn the thermostat down by 1°C or alternatively, turn the thermostatic radiator valves down to a level you feel comfortable with.

■ **Curtains**

Close curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows.

■ **Lights**

Use energy efficient light bulbs. They last up to twelve times longer and use a fraction of the electricity used by ordinary bulbs.

■ **Television etc.**

Avoid leaving them on 'standby' as this wastes energy.

■ **Fridges/Freezers**

Don't leave the door open for longer than is necessary, as cold air will escape. Avoid putting hot food straight into the fridge.

■ **Washing Machine**

Always wash with a full load – and if you can't, use a half-load or economy programme if your machine has one. Always use a low temperature programme, bearing in mind that with modern washing powders, this will be just as effective.

■ **Tumble Dryers**

Don't put really wet clothes into a tumble dryer. Wring them out or spin-dry them first. It will dry much faster and can save you money.

■ **Pots and Pans**

Choose the right size pan for the food and cooker – the base should just cover an electric cooker ring. Keep lids on when cooking with gas, the flames only need heat the bottom of the pan. If they lick up the side then you are wasting heat and money.

■ **Kettles**

Only heat the amount of water you need, and if you are using an electric kettle, make sure that the water covers the element. Jug type kettles need less water as they have smaller elements.

■ **Energy Bills**

You may wish to consider an energy supplier who can provide both gas and electricity for a fixed weekly charge. The cheapest tariffs tend to be for customers paying by Direct Debit.

● **OPERATING YOUR CENTRAL HEATING SYSTEM**

■ **SOLID FUEL SYSTEMS**

This will be either an open coal fire with a back boiler or a closed type room heater designed to burn coke. Thermostats have been installed in many systems whereby the central heating pump automatically switches on when the temperature in the back boiler reaches a certain level.

■ **GAS SYSTEMS**

Your gas central heating and hot water system is operated by using a timer clock and room thermostat. The controls allow you to have hot water only or heating and hot water.

You should have been given detailed heating instructions when you moved into your home, but if required, we can send out a new set.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

For any heating appliance to burn properly, there must be adequate ventilation. If the ventilation is inadequate, there could be a build up of dangerous levels of carbon monoxide, which can kill.

NEVER BLOCK VENTS ON AN APPLIANCE

NEVER COVER, BLOCK OR OBSTRUCT ANY GRILLES, FLUES OR AIR BRICKS

NEVER ALLOW ANYONE TO SLEEP IN THE LIVING ROOM WHERE THE GAS FIRE IS.

■ FROST PRECAUTIONS

Serious damage can be caused if water freezes in pipes, and then expands causing them to burst and flood the property when the thaw comes. Most burst pipes can be avoided by taking the following precautions in a cold spell:-

- Keep the house as warm as possible at all times, this may mean keeping the heating on a frost setting overnight.
- Know where the main stop cock is and make sure it is in working order – if it is not, ask for it to be repaired straight away.

● LEAVING YOUR HOME EMPTY IN COLD WEATHER

● GAS CENTRAL HEATING

You should set the boiler setting on constant and on a low temperature to keep the house warm while you are away and so in this case, there is no need to drain the heating system down.

Your contents insurance may be invalidated if you do not leave the heating on constant.

● **FIRE**

If you discover a fire in your home do not attempt to fight it. Leave your home immediately and close the door of the room where the fire has started to prevent the spread of heat and smoke.

Alert anyone else in the property and get them out.

Call the Fire Brigade at once – telephone 999.

Never go back into the home until a fire officer has told you it is safe to do so.

● HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF FIRE IN YOUR HOME



CHIP PANS

- are one of the most common causes of fires. The best advice is to get rid of your chip pan altogether.

If you must cook chips:

- never fill the pan more than one-third full
- never leave the pan unattended
- never put food in the pan if the oil begins to give off smoke – it is too hot. Turn off the heat and leave the oil to cool

Better still – buy oven or microwave chips.

SMOKERS

- never leave a lit cigarette, cigar or pipe unattended

- never smoke in a chair if you think you might doze off

- never smoke in bed
- before emptying ashtrays, make sure contents are cold
- always keep matches and lighters well out of reach of children

PORTABLE HEATERS

- keep them well away from clothes and furnishings

ELECTRIC APPLIANCES

- never run flex under carpet or lino
- never run an electrical appliance from a light fitting
- never use electrical appliances in the bathroom (except showers)
- make sure that the correct fuse is in the plug
- only operate washers/dryers etc when you are in the property.

CANDLES

- make sure candles are secured in a proper holder and away from materials that may catch fire, like curtains
- put candles out when you leave the room

PLUG IN AIR

- do not leave switched on for long periods of time
- ensure they are unplugged at night

ELECTRIC BLANKETS

- always follow the makers' instructions when using electric blankets
- have the blanket inspected at least every three years by the makers, or more often if they recommend it.

Some local councils will provide this service at a nominal cost

BEDTIME ROUTINE

- switch off and unplug all electrical appliances not designed to stay on
- switch off any gas fires or portable heaters
- close the doors of all rooms

IN FLATS

- do not tamper with the self-closing mechanism of any door, or wedge the door open. The closers have been fitted so that fireproof doors contain a fire within a small area

● **CONDENSATION**

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it.

There are four main factors that cause condensation:-

- TOO MUCH MOISTURE BEING PRODUCED AT HOME
- NOT ENOUGH VENTILATION
- COLD SURFACES
- THE TEMPERATURE OF YOUR HOME

Excessive condensation leads to mould growth on walls and furniture, mildew on clothes and other fabrics and the rotting of wooden frames.

How to reduce it

- Hang your washing outside to dry if at all possible.
- Don't be tempted to put it on radiators or in front of a radiant heater

- If you use a tumble dryer, make sure it is vented to the outside or that it is of the new condensing type.
- Always cook with pan lids on, and turn the heat down once the water has boiled.
- When filling your bath, run the cold water first then add the hot
- Try to avoid use of bottled gas heaters
- Don't use your gas cooker to heat your kitchen as it produces moisture when burning gas.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed to prevent moisture escaping into the rest of the house
- Ventilate your kitchen and bathroom for about 20 minutes after use by opening a small top window or extractor fan if possible.
- To reduce the risk of mildew on clothes and other stored items, allow air to circulate round them by removing 'false' wardrobe backs or drilling holes in them.
- Keep a small gap between large pieces of furniture and the walls
- Never overfill wardrobes and cupboards, as it restricts air circulation.
- Cross ventilate your home for around 30 minutes per day. This means opening two windows on either side of your home with the internal doors open to allow the property to ventilate.

Temperature of your home

Heating one room to a high level and leaving the other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the unheated rooms.

Keeping the heating on at low all day in cold weather will help control condensation.

How to tackle mould in the home

- Dry your windows and window sills every morning

Steps against mould growth

- To kill and remove mould, wipe down or spray walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash that carries a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 'approval number', and ensure that you follow all the instructions for its safe use.
- After treatment, redecorate using good-quality fungicidal paint and a fungicidal resistant wall paper paste to help prevent mould recurring.

● **IMPROVEMENTS AND ALTERATIONS**

Some residents choose to carry out alterations to their homes for their added comfort.

Before carrying out any alterations, you must contact the office to request permission, you should give as much detail as possible, e.g. plans and who you propose to do the work.

It is likely that we will need to visit you to check that:

- The work will not cause structural damage to the home
- It will not affect neighbouring properties and residents
- Planning Permission or Building Regulation approval is required
- We are not planning similar works in the near future
- The work will be carried out by suitably qualified contractors
- The alteration will not reduce the amenities for future residents

You will receive a letter informing you whether or not

permission has been granted. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld but may include certain conditions to ensure that the above-mentioned problems do not occur.

If you carry out work without written permission, we will reserve the right to make good or remove unsatisfactory works at your expense.

We must also reserve the right to remove any additions to the property if it becomes necessary to carry out maintenance. For example, it may be necessary to take down porches or sheds to lay new yards or drains.

● **PORCHES, SHEDS AND GREENHOUSES**

If you wish to erect a porch you will also need to seek written permission.

We are willing to allow residents to erect sheds in either the rear gardens or yards providing that the size is no greater than 6 feet by 4 feet and they are properly constructed purpose-built sheds. Greenhouses should be no greater than 8 ft by 6 ft.

All sheds and greenhouses must be raised a minimum of 4 inches from the ground where they are to be located on a landscaped area. This is to prevent damage from grass trimmers.

Before erecting a shed or greenhouse, you must obtain written permission from our office. We will want to know where you propose to locate it as it is important that you consider your neighbours in relation to blocking out natural light. In exceptional circumstances permission may be given for larger sheds or greenhouses.

I am sure you will agree that the overall appearance of our homes is very important, and the erection of various forms of outbuildings can all too easily spoil the appearance.

● **GARDENS**

It is your responsibility to keep your gardens tidy, except where we carry out landscape maintenance.

Please think about the overall appearance of the area and do not use old doors etc. for fencing and avoid siting leek trenches, cold frames and the like in the front garden.

Please think about the growing speed and overall size of any planted shrubs and trees. They can potentially block light or become a nuisance in the future if not maintained.

The Association is not responsible for the following issues:-

- Removal of moss from paths and fences
- Clearing of paths from snow
- Removal and disposal of fallen leaves

● **PESTS**

If you have a problem with pests such as rats, mice, wasps etc, please notify the Customer Service Team. We may need to contact the local council or a private contractor to get rid of the problem. Where there are problems such as ants or flies, we would expect you to take your own action, such as laying ant powder or using a fly spray. If the problem persists, contact the Customer Services Team. Please note certain species of bees are endangered and we are therefore not allowed to remove them from your property.

● **CAR PARKING**

Car parking is a particular problem in some of our older properties where the only available area is often the back lane.

Please park considerately it is important for ambulances or fire engines to obtain access at all times.

On newer developments each home has its own space with additional spaces for visitors. Please do not allow your visitors to park on your neighbours' space.

- **CARAVANS, MOTOR HOMES AND COMMERCIAL VEHICLES**

The parking of caravans, motor homes and larger commercial vehicles is not permitted on any of the Associations developments.

- **NEIGHBOUR DISPUTES & ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**



Under the Terms of the Appointment, residents are expected to occupy the property in a reasonable manner, so that you or your invited guests do not cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or other members of the public.

One of the most common forms of nuisance relates to noise, so please consider your neighbours comfort. The noise from a television or radio etc. can create serious disturbance especially late at night or early in the morning.

If you have such a problem, it is always best to first try and resolve problems between yourselves. If you cannot and the disturbance continues, contact your Area Housing Officer.

The Association will not tolerate any anti-social behaviour that affects the quality of life of a resident.

Where the Anti Social Behaviour is not caused by one of our residents or their visitors we will work with other partners to help solve any problems. A copy of our Anti Social Behaviour Policy can be sent out on request.

● **HARASSMENT**

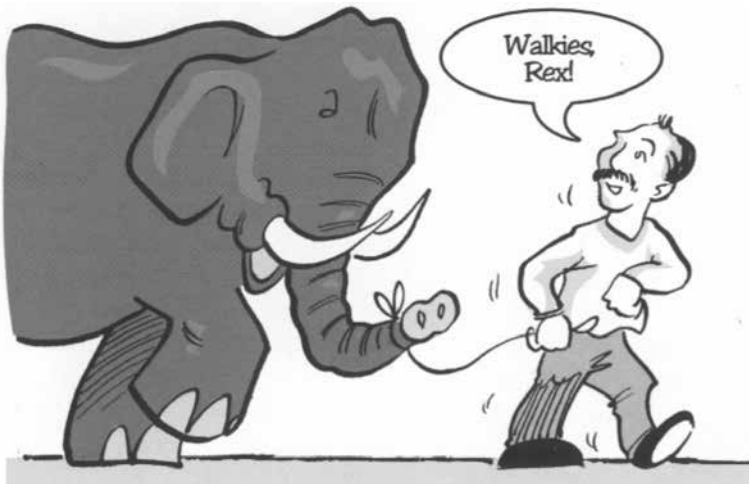
We aim to ensure that our residents live in an environment free from any form of harassment or intimidation.

We will take action where a resident or their invited guests commit any form of harassment for example on the grounds of race, religion or belief, colour, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation or any other persistent attack which may interfere with the comfort of, or cause offence to any resident, visitors or neighbours.

If you are subject to such abuse, please inform your housing officer as soon as possible.

A copy of our Harassment Policy can be sent out on request.

● PETS



We are normally willing to allow residents to keep a domestic pet providing it does not cause any nuisance to neighbours.

You are responsible for ensuring that your pet is properly looked after.

You will be breaking local byelaws if you allow a dog to roam freely and unsupervised or allowing it to foul public streets and landscaped areas.

● HOUSEHOLD RUBBISH

The collection of domestic waste is the responsibility of your local council and you should contact them if you have any problems.

If you have large items such as old furniture you wish to dispose of, the Cleansing Department of your local council can normally arrange for removal. There may be a charge for this service.

If you have limited mobility your Local Authority can offer a service where by your bin is collected and returned to your

door. You should contact your local authority to apply for this service.

● **CONCESSIONARY TELEVISION LICENCES**

The rules on concessionary television licences are fairly complex and the Association has no control whatsoever on who is allowed them.

To currently qualify for a concessionary licence you will need to be:-

Retired

Aged 60 or over and not working in paid employment for more than 15 hours a week.

OR

Disabled

A person is disabled if their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired, or they have a mental disorder, they are physically and substantially disabled by illness, or any impairment present from birth or otherwise.

If you are a single occupant and work more than 15 hours per week you will need to let us know.

In a joint household you will only need to tell us if both residents work more than 15 hours per week.

● **ACCESS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION**

We hold certain personal information on all residents, mainly to allow us to respond in the event of an emergency. If at any time you wish to check the information held, please contact the Customer Service Team giving at least 24 hours notice.

We treat all personal information held as confidential and will only be divulged to other individuals or organisations on a 'need to know' basis, e.g. to the police, fire, ambulance, medical services and local authorities.

● **RIGHT TO BUY**

As a resident of an Almshouse Charity, you do not have the Right to Buy your home.

Where the Association has decided to sell vacant homes in a particular location, the existing residents of those homes will be given the opportunity to buy, but Charity Law states that the price paid must be the market value as assessed by a qualified valuer.

● **COMPLAINTS**

Your day-to-day contact with the Association will be with our staff and our aim is to provide the best possible service to you.

Please note that the first time you report something, or request a service or information, this is not classed as a complaint.

Our complaints procedure starts to apply after we have made an attempt to resolve the matter. If you are not happy with any aspect of our service at this point, or feel you have been treated unfairly then a copy of our Complaints Policy is available on request from our office.

Should you still feel that your complaint has not been dealt with properly or fairly, you may contact either a designated person or the:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Fax: 020 7831 1942

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

who will investigate your complaint. The Ombudsman expects that you first give the Association the opportunity to resolve the complaint.

Should you wish to make a complaint to the Ombudsman, we can provide you with the appropriate information leaflet and form.

Please be aware that where the matter is not referred via a designated person the ombudsman will only consider the case after 8 weeks have lapsed.

● **COMPENSATION**



You may feel at some time that we have been negligent in our responsibilities resulting in damage to your personal property or injury to yourself.

Should this be the case, you should write to the appropriate Head of Department outlining the details of your claim against us. The matter will be passed to our Insurers, who will investigate and address any compensation, where it is found that we have a legal liability. The matter will also be given due consideration by the Executive Committee via the appropriate Sub Committee.

Every effort will be made to ensure that claims are dealt with as quickly as possible and within timescales set out under

the Woolf Report which states that:

- Before issuing proceedings, you or your representatives must write to the Association providing details of the accident, injury and damages
- The Insurance Company has 21 days to acknowledge the letter of claim from the date of posting of the letter
- If there is no response, you can commence proceedings
- The Insurance Company has 90 days from the issue of the acknowledgement letter to accept liability, deny liability or allege contributory negligence.

7. USEFUL CONTACTS

LOCAL AUTHORITY COUNCIL OFFICES

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL 03000 26 0000
help@durham.gov.uk

**GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL** (0191) 4333000

CITY OF SUNDERLAND (0191) 5205555

**SOUTH TYNESIDE METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL** (0191) 4277000

ADULT SOCIAL CARE DIRECT

Durham County Council 03000 267979

South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council 0191 4246000

City of Sunderland 0191 5205552

Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council 0191 4337033

DIRECTGOV NUMBERS

Job Centre Plus 0345 6043719
Textphone 0345 6088551

Pension Service 0800 7317898
Textphone 0800 7317339

Disability & Carer Benefits General Advice 0800 882200
Textphone 0800 243355

AGE UK

County Durham

0191 3746367
info@ageukcountydurham.org.uk

Gateshead

0191 4900221
infoandadvice@ageukgsteshead.org.uk

Sunderland

0191 5141131
enquiries@ageuksunderland.org.uk

South Tyneside

0191 4566903
info@ac-ts.org.uk

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

Northumbrian Water

0345 7171100 or 0800 171100

Gas Leaks

0800 111999

NEDL

0800 375675

Loss of Electricity Supply

105

Crime Stoppers

0800 555111

Elder Abuse

0808 8088141

NHS Urgent Care

111

Police Non Emergency Line

101

Citizens Advice

03444 111444