



SPITALFIELDS

HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

স্পিটালফিল্ড হাউজিং এসোসিয়েশন লিমিটেড



Tenants' Handbook

Tenants' Handbook

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Other formats

This booklet can be requested in Bengali or other community languages, in Braille, large print or on audio tape form Spitalfields Housing.

- Bengali
- Somali
- Chinese
- Arabic

Welcome

On behalf of the Board and staff of Spitalfields Housing Association (SHA) I would like to introduce you to the latest edition of our Tenants Handbook. If you are a new tenant I would also like to offer you a particularly warm welcome to SHA.

This handbook is designed to be an easy to read guide explaining SHA services and the rights and responsibilities of both you as tenants and SHA as your landlord. We have tried to include as much general advice as possible as well as detailed advice about your rent, the repairs service and how you can get involved.

The guide has been developed with residents and is intended to help you make the most of the services we offer. If there are any issues not covered by this handbook and you need further information then please contact us. If we cannot help then we will know someone who can.

From time to time the law or our policies may change. If this happens, we will tell you either in our newsletter or by letter. More information is available from our website.

Both our newsletter and website are useful sources of information. If you have any feedback for us on this handbook or would like to be involved in future editions or with the website please contact muge@spitalfieldsha.co.uk.



Introduction to Spitalfields Housing Association (SHA)

SHA is a friendly, community based social housing provider registered with the Social Housing Regulator.

We provide housing in the east end of London and almost all our housing is currently located in Tower Hamlets.

Our vision is to provide much more than housing, we want to create thriving communities and improve the quality of life of our residents. We believe the best way to provide a housing service for the community is with the community and our relationship with our residents is strong.

We are a not-for-profit organisation and we invest back into the community through our Community Development programme which includes summer play days and summer trips for residents and we have a new Community Centre coming on stream in 2015. Please visit our website for our upcoming scheduled programme activities.

Our Head Office is in Quaker Street, on the corner of Brick Lane and that is where we manage your home from.

Your Housing officer can assist with general enquiries about the service and you should report any problems you have with your home to them. You can find us at:

Spitalfields Housing Association

78 Quaker Street
London
E1 6SW

T 020 7392 5400
E admin@spitalfieldsha.co.uk
Text number: 07407 468 518

Opening hours

Monday – Friday
9.30 – 5.30pm
(Friday closed 1 – 2.30pm)

You can also make a number of enquiries online at our website www.spitalfieldsha.co.uk



Making yourself at home

A few tips to make moving into your SHA home a little easier. If you are a new tenant there are a few things you need to check before you are settled in. If you have lived in your home for some time, you may need to read this handbook just in case there are things you have forgotten.

Help is at hand

You should report any problems you have with your home to our office.

We can assist with housing advice, repairs, rents, benefits and transfer applications.

Getting Connected

Your gas and electric supplies should be connected when you move in.

This cannot always be guaranteed so at least two days before you want to move in, you should check with the gas and electricity supply companies to see if everything is on.

As soon as you move in you should read the meters and let the gas and electricity companies know that you are the new tenant. This should ensure that you are not charged for power the previous occupants have used. Tell the supply companies your name and address and the exact meter readings. If you are not confident about this, ask them to send someone round to read the meters for you.

If your home has key meters for gas and electricity, make sure you know where they are, they can be hard to find in the dark! If the gas runs out make sure you turn off all the gas points before you recharge the key.

When the gas comes on make sure the pilot lights are lit. Key meters can be a lot more expensive than paying by monthly direct debit. Ask your energy supplier for details of the cost!

If your new home has a phone, you should contact the telephone company to arrange transfer to your name if you want to take over the phone line. If you don't do this before you move in, you may have to pay a hefty reconnection charge (you may also have to pay this if the previous occupants want to take their telephone number with them to their new home).

Some SHA homes are connected to a communal satellite TV service because we do not permit satellite dishes to be fixed to our building (unless you live in a house). Please contact your Housing Officer for advice on how to access satellite TV.

The water supply

The water supply should be on when you move in. If it isn't, find the stopcock and turn it on.

If your water is running properly you should still find out where the stopcock is because you may have to turn it off in an emergency. If you cannot find the stopcock or if it doesn't work, contact us immediately.

You should also tell Thames Water you have moved in so you can start paying water charges. In some properties water charges are included in your rent. We will tell you if this applies.

Heating and Hot Water

The heating and hot water system will be different according to where you are moving. A full safety check will have been undertaken on the gas and electricity installations in all our lettings, you should have been shown how to operate the heating and hot water system when you viewed the property. If there is not one in the property ask for a copy of the operating manual for your boiler or any other installations.

Fuses and circuit breakers

The electricity supply is controlled by circuit breakers.

Circuit breakers automatically switch off if there is a problem. They are a bit easier to deal with than fuses, but again it is a good idea to make sure you know where they are and what to do. If several appliances go off at once you should:

1. Unplug, or switch off at the wall, anything you think may have caused the problem.
2. Switch off the electricity at the mains.
3. Find the switch that has turned itself to "off" and flick it back to "on".
4. Switch the electricity back on.

If the switch cuts out again contact our office.

Council Tax

When you move you do not automatically get bills for your Council Tax. It is your job to tell the Council that you are the new tenant. You should write to them with your name, your new address and the date you moved in.

You can arrange to pay your Council Tax in monthly instalments. It is better to sort this out quickly and not run the risk of building up a huge bill you have to pay later. You should also contact the Council if you need help paying this bill due to low income or disability, or if you are the only adult in your home. This is called Council Tax Reduction.

The address of the Tower Hamlets Council Tax Office is:

Tower Hamlets Council

Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
LONDON E14 2BG

Or you can contact your local One Stop Shop. If you live outside Tower Hamlets your Housing Officer will advise you of the correct address to contact.

Benefits

If you are on a low income you may need help with paying your rent. The current system is called Housing Benefits and this is calculated by the Council. In Tower Hamlets you can apply online or at the local One Stop Shop. You will need to contact the Council even if you are already receiving Housing Benefits as your rent will be different in your new home. If you also receive other benefits this could affect how much housing benefit you get. You should sort this out quickly so you don't find yourself short of money, or having to pay back large amounts. Your Housing Officer will be able to help you fill in the various forms. The Government is changing the system that helps people on low incomes pay their rent. This is called Universal Credit. Your Housing Officer will give you more details when this new system is introduced to this part of London. This started in March 2015 for new single claimant's and gradually be rolled out over the next two years.

Health

If you are new to the area you may need to register with a GP and dentist.

You could ask your neighbours to recommend people or, if you live in Tower Hamlets, contact the Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) who will be able to advise you on health provision in your neighbourhood.

You can contact the CCG on 020 3688 2531. It is best to register as soon as possible rather than wait until you, or someone in your household, is ill.

Letting People Know

Make a list of people and organisations that should know you have moved. This could include your employers, benefit offices, banks, building societies, credit card companies and so on.

You will need to update your address on your TV licence as well (write to TV licensing, Barton House Bristol, BS98 1TL or phone 0117 937 7500.)

For a few pounds you can get the post office to re-direct your mail from your old home to your new home.

Help with setting up a new home

The London Community Credit Union can offer support and assistance to any tenant who has moved into a new home. This includes help and advice on managing your finances and advice on obtaining a low cost loan. You can contact the Credit Union through their website at www.lccu.co.uk.

And finally...

We are here to make sure any problems you have are sorted out without any delays or fuss. The rest of this handbook tells you how to get the best out of our service. If there is anything you don't understand or if you need any help or advice, please talk to your Housing Officer.

Your tenancy agreement

This handbook should be read alongside your tenancy agreement. It is an important document. It is a contract between SHA as your landlord and yourself as a tenant or joint tenant.

Joint tenant

A joint tenancy means that all named tenants are equally responsible for the property and share the rights and responsibilities.

Assured tenancy

With a few limited exceptions your tenancy with SHA will be an Assured Tenancy. It gives you the right to live in your home for as long as you require it and as long as you keep to the terms and conditions of your agreement.

The tenancy can only be ended if one or more of the conditions shown in the Tenancy Agreement are broken or if you no longer live in the property as your only or principle home.

Starter tenancies

What is a Starter Tenancy?

A starter tenancy (or probationary tenancy) is a type of tenancy which SHA gives our tenants who are new to having their own home with a social landlord.

It means that for a period of 12 months from the start of your tenancy, SHA will check that you are keeping to the terms of tenancy agreement, such as being a good neighbour and paying your rent. During this period you do not have some rights that are available to “full” assured tenants and it is easier for SHA to take action to end your tenancy if you are not keeping to the terms of your tenancy agreement.

Why does Spitalfields Housing use starter tenancies?

They can be useful in identifying which households need support, especially when starting as new tenants. They also make it easier for SHA to take action against tenants who do not keep to the terms of their tenancy agreement, for example by causing anti- social behaviour or nuisance to neighbours.

What happens next?

During the first 12 months of your tenancy you will be asked to meet with your housing officer. At the end of the 12 months the Housing Officer will make a recommendation regarding your tenancy. This recommendation can be to move to an assured tenancy if all is well, to extend the starter tenancy for up to 6 months or to terminate the tenancy if there have been persistent unresolved issues/failure to keep to

the terms of your tenancy agreement. If termination were recommended, you would have the right to appeal.

Passing on your tenancy

There are two ways of passing on your tenancy.

Assignment

This means transferring your tenancy to someone else. This can be done only in the following circumstances:

- if the court has decided that a tenancy has to go from one spouse to another as part of divorce proceedings
- if you wish to carry out a valid mutual exchange

For further details contact your housing officer.

Succession

If a tenant dies and there has not already been a succession then a member of the tenant's family (usually a spouse or partner) living in the property may qualify to take over the tenancy.

There are a number of conditions to be met so please discuss any such situation with your housing officer.

Ending your tenancy

Before you leave your home you must tell us in writing at least four weeks before you go. Clear your arrears leave a forwarding address, clear and clean your property, make sure Council Tax and all other bills are paid and the accounts cancelled. Remember to get your phone and broadband disconnected too. Make sure you take everything with you – we will have

to dispose of anything left behind and may charge you for that. Hand all your keys back to the association and leave us your new address so that we can contact you if we need to. You will need to make sure that your rent/service charge account is clear before moving.

Lodgers & subletting

You can take in a lodger as long as you notify us in writing with the full details of your proposed lodger. If you sublet or transfer your tenancy illegally we will take immediate legal action to repossess your home and evict any people living there. Under the conditions of your tenancy agreement, you are not allowed to sublet the whole of your home. You may sublet part of your home [with written permission].

Being a good neighbour

You should be able to enjoy life in your home. Good neighbours will tolerate the different lifestyles of people living near them as long as they don't cause a nuisance. Good neighbours will also understand the impact their behaviour may have on their neighbours and act accordingly.

We want you to be able to enjoy your home and neighbourhood. By following these basic rules, we hope all residents will have full enjoyment of their home.

SHA will encourage all residents to become involved in the local community. This can be through getting involved in or starting a new Tenants Association or through taking part in activities at local Community Centre. In 2015 we are opening our first purpose built Community Centre which will offer a range of services for the local community. This is at Pedley Street/ Fakruddin Street on the Vallance Road E1. Our residents can also access the services offered from Selby Street Community Centre. For other ways to get involved please see "Getting Involved" section within this booklet or our website: www.spitalfieldsha.co.uk



Being a good neighbour

We all have a responsibility for the quality of life in our neighborhood. Neighbours can be a good source of support, so why not think about introducing yourself and your family to your neighbours if you haven't already done so?

How people behave in and around their homes makes all the difference to everyone's quality of life. Sometimes people can't help causing some disturbance as they go about their lives. We accept that sometimes this can be annoying, but we do expect you to be tolerant with your neighbours.

We also expect you to take responsibility for your own behaviour and the behaviour of your children and visitors. We ask you to treat your neighbours and your neighbourhood with respect.

Mutual respect

If you have problems with your neighbours try to resolve them in a friendly and polite way. Listen to each other's point of view, and accept that sometimes problems are caused with no blame or malice on either side. If you can't resolve your problem, you can ask SHA for help.

Noise Nuisance

Please do not annoy your neighbours by making too much noise – including playing loud music, having your TV on loud, slamming doors, or by having too many late night parties.

Keeping your environment clean

- put your rubbish into the designated bins and teach your children to do so
- spitting is unhygienic and unsightly so please do not spit in and around communal areas including the lift
- clean up, straight away, any litter or other mess made by you, your family or visitors
- park considerately, so that you don't block anyone's access and always display your permit to avoid a ticket
- it is against the law to smoke in all communal parts of the building
- be responsible for your children and your visitors – do not let children play in halls, lobbies, corridors or stairways
- no ball games or sports, skating or skateboarding, bike or scooter riding in communal areas – unless we provide a special area for this
- never leave, store or dump anything in shared areas, including furniture, old fridges or other appliances, bikes, mobility scooters, shoe/shoe racks prams and pushchairs – remember, we have a legal duty to keep shared areas clear as these things can cause a fire hazard or stop you exiting the property quickly if there is a fire
- if communal areas are cluttered we will dispose of the items and charge you for the cost after giving you a warning

Pet nuisance

You may only keep a dog, cat, bird or other animal if you have our written permission. You are responsible for ensuring the pet does not cause a nuisance to neighbours and for cleaning up any mess they create in communal areas.

Harassment/Anti Social Behaviour

What is anti-social behaviour?

The term anti-social behaviour (ASB) covers a wide range of unacceptable activity that blights the lives of many people on a daily basis. It often leaves victims feeling helpless, desperate and with a seriously reduced quality of life. Terms such as 'nuisance', 'disorder' and 'harassment' are also often used to describe this type of behaviour.

ASB is defined as "Behaviour by a person which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the person".

ASB can be reported in a number of ways and not just to the Police. The Local Authority has a dedicated department that deals with community safety issues including ASB on the website. It can be reported to SHA via telephone, email and in person to any member of staff and will be dealt with as per our ASB Policy.

SHA takes ASB very seriously and anyone found causing or allowing their household members or invited visitors to cause ASB may risk losing their tenancy. SHA will consider evicting persistent offenders.

To report an incident please contact Spitalfields Housing on 020 7392 5400 opt.2 or log on to our website and press 'Report a nuisance/anti-social behaviour' to complete a reporting form. To report to the council please dial 0207 364 5000 or 101 to the police on the non-emergency number or you can log on to www.towerhamlets.gov.uk, press report it and then press anti-social behaviour option. For reporting to the police you can visit <http://content.met.police.uk/Borough/TowerHamlets> and you can find your local policing team by using the post code search option.

Examples of ASB:

- littering or dumping rubbish
- using rude, abusive, threatening or insulting language towards neighbours
- uncontrolled or dangerous dogs
- joyriding or using vehicles in an anti-social manner (for example blocking access, noisy radios, wheel spinning)
- abandoning a vehicle
- excessively drinking alcohol, alcohol related trouble or buying and selling drugs in the street
- trespassing
- nuisance calling
- prostitution related activities
- fireworks
- noise
- begging/vagrancy
- rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour

Subletting

If a resident sublets or transfers the tenancy illegally, we will take immediate legal action to repossess that home and evict any people living there. If you suspect someone is subletting their home or would like to discuss this issue in greater detail, please contact your housing officer.



Your rent and service charges

Your rent is used in four main ways:

- to repair your home when things go wrong or are worn out
- to maintain and clean communal areas
- to manage the housing service – running our office, organising the housing system and general administration
- to help pay back the money we have borrowed to modernise older homes and build new ones

How is the amount of rent decided?

Currently assured tenancy rents are set using a government formula with annual rent increases based on inflation rates from the previous September. The purpose of the “rent formula” is to ensure that rents remain affordable, that rents are fair and linked to the service provided and that differences between rents for housing associations and local councils are removed. Subject to change in the next financial year.

When and why does the rent change?

The tenancy agreement that you sign when you first move in tells you how much rent you should pay.

As costs rise, we usually have to increase this amount to maintain the housing service and to keep your home in good condition. Your tenancy agreement explains how your rent will be adjusted every year but not more than once. You don't have to worry about unexpected rent increases, as we will tell you, in writing, at least four weeks before any rent change.

Service Charges

Included in your overall rent are some service charges which pay for specific services which only some tenants may get. These include gardening and grounds maintenance, estate cleaning, security systems or a concierge service, estate lighting, lift, fire alarm, health & safety inspection, TV aerial & pest control.

SHA will aim to keep our service charges reasonable. We will use our best endeavours to ensure that costs are reasonably incurred and the services and works undertaken are carried out to a reasonable standard.

Can I get help to pay my rent?

You may be able to get help with paying your rent. It depends on your income, how big your family is and how much you have in savings. It is worth applying even if you think you won't qualify.

At present this help is called **Housing Benefit** and you can obtain the form from your Council via, their One Stop Shops, or from our office. You can also complete the form on the Council's website. If you are already claiming and your circumstances change or you change your address you can complete a change of circumstances form.

In the future this help will be part of **Universal Credit** and you will need to apply to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). You can apply online.

If you need help completing these forms, your Housing Officer or Tenancy Support Officer will be able to help. Please ask at our office or read our newsletter or look at our website and we will keep you up to date with phone numbers, addresses and websites.

Get in touch

If you do get behind with your rent please contact us. At SHA we give a good service to all our tenants- including those with money troubles. It is in our interest, and yours, to help you pay any rent debt. If you are struggling to make ends meet you should get in touch with us straightaway- by keeping the problem to yourself the debt can only get worse. If you don't let us know you could risk losing your home.

Expert help

Ask to speak to our Tenancy Support Officer, who provides specialist and confidential help to:

- **check** you are entitled to benefits
- **make sure** you are getting all the right benefits
- **provide** any claims forms you may need and help you to fill them in
- **explain** any benefit rules you do not understand
- **suggest** the best way to manage your cash
- **advise** you on getting a suitable bank account, affordable credit, and other financial help
- **refer** you to other specialist advice services

We have links with money advisers, debt advisers, employment advisers and other advice agencies. We are concerned that all our tenants have access to suitable financial products, and advice and training so you understand what is available. This is called Financial Inclusion.

If you need help – always ask. If we cannot help you directly, we can refer you to someone who can.

How do I pay?

Your rent is due every week on a Monday. When you first move in you will have been given a Rent Payment Card to help you keep your rent up to date. You can pay by the following means:

- Direct Debit payment, please contact your housing officer to set up Direct Debit payments
- With cash or card at any local shop or post office where a paypoint system is operating with your Allpay Card (some local shops may not accept card payments), you will need to apply for an Allpay card with your housing officer
- Payments online via www.allpayments.net, please be advised you will need an Allpay card in order to use this service
- Direct bank or standing order payments to our account with the following details below

Account name:

Spitalfields Housing Association Ltd

Account number: 69178143

Sort code: 56-00-20

If you are making payments to our account directly, please make sure you use your unique tenant reference key or property key.

Please contact your housing officer if you need to obtain your unique tenant reference or property key.

- over the phone with your debit card or credit card (please call our reception or your housing officer).
- in person at our office (please be advised we only accept cash or cheque payments at our office).

How can I check where I am with my rent?

You will get a rent statement every three months- we usually send it with our newsletter. It tells you how much you should pay and how much you have actually paid. It shows whether you owe us any rent (called rent arrears) or if you have paid more than you need (called pre paid). If you want to know how you stand at other times you can contact us by phone, email, text, or in person and ask for your balance at our office.

Contact details for obtaining balance information:

T 020 7392 5400

E housingmanagement@spitalfieldsha.co.uk

Text: 07407 468518

Please be advised security questions may be asked in order to verify the recipient.

If you receive Housing Benefit you might notice a delay with that money appearing on your rent account as the Council pay in arrears only once every four weeks.



Repairs and maintenance

How to report a repair

If you have a repair, which is our responsibility, please report it to us as quickly as possible. We will then arrange for the repair to be carried out.

Our service standards for repairs are attached.

Below you will find information on how to report a repair and on the next page you will find more information about what you are responsible for and what we are responsible for.

There are different ways you can contact us with your repair by:

Via phone

0800 644 6441, 0207 392 5400, 0207 392 5409 or for out of hours emergencies 0844 644 6441 or 0207 392 5400

Via email

repairs@spitalfieldsha.co.uk

Via website

www.spitalfieldsha.co.uk

Visitng us in person

78 Quaker Street, London, E1 6SW

For out of hours emergencies, the same numbers listed above apply.

For gas boilers

For reporting repairs on Boilers or Central Heating systems, please contact Robert Heath Heating directly, they are our contractors. They operate 24 hours a day.

Below are their contact details:

T 0207 247 6744 / 0208 336 6767

Pest control

For reporting pest control problems – bed bugs, cockroaches, fleas, mice and wasps, please contact Tower Hamlets Council:
T 0207 364 5007

Repairs and maintenance

We are responsible for some of the repairs to your home, but there are some items for which you are responsible. The table below and overleaf is a guide which explains who is responsible for what.

Remember that you have to pay for any damage caused to your home by your negligence or through any accidental or wilful damage by you or any visitors. You are also responsible for any damage or repairs that are required to any improvements that you have carried out to your home.

Item	SHA role	Tenant role	Exceptions/ comments
Fittings and fixtures of building including internal doors (toilet, bathroom shower, kitchen, and front and rear entrance door), kitchen units, sanitary ware, internal joinery, cupboards and fireplaces	✓		
Service installations including drains, inspection chambers, wastes, water pipes, electrical installations, gas pipes, central heating, communal lights, fire alarms, warden call alarms, door entry phones, lifts and communal television aerials	✓		
Redecoration to external and to communal areas and renewal of defective external joinery	✓		Every seven years
External works including paths, fences and pavements	✓		
Communal facilities of flats including paths; drying areas; paved areas; grassed areas	✓		
Any repair caused by negligence, mis-use or willful damage of the tenant, his or her family or their visitors to the property.		✓	
Repair of minor plaster cracks of under 3mm width		✓	
Internal decorations		✓	
Renewal of light bulbs		✓	Other than communal lights

Item	SHA role	Tenant role	Exceptions/ comments
Replacement of lost keys or a change of locks to doors and windows		✓	
Bleeding of air from radiators, unless it is part of a pressurised heating system		✓	
Any repairs after a mutual exchange have been agreed resulting from neglect, mis-use or willful damage of the previous tenant		✓	
The repair or renewal of timber sheds, timber outbuildings or greenhouses		✓	
Toilet seat and hinges		✓	
Internal drain blockage		✓	
Oiling internal door locks		✓	
Oiling door and window hinges		✓	
Changing electrical fuses (see DIY section on the website)		✓	
Changing light bulbs		✓	
Taking frost precautions (see DIY section on the website)		✓	
Changing doorbell batteries		✓	
Cleaning extractor fan/hoods for cookers and kitchen, bathroom & WC		✓	
Planing the bottom of the doors after laying carpets		✓	
Cleaning windows		✓	

Item	SHA role	Tenant role	Exceptions/ comments
Redecorations of internal wall, ceiling and woodwork, including the internal aspect of windows		✓	
<p>Making good any damage you may be responsible for repairs to any installations or fixtures and fittings you have installed. This includes for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fitting a cooker chain to your cooker to make sure it is safe • fitting connections to install a washing machine where you are responsible for the fitting, maintenance or damage that results from lack of proper maintenance • if you have installed a gas or electrical appliance – you are obliged to seek permission first – you are responsible for making sure it is safe (a common requirement is you make sure a gas appliance is checked at least once a year) 		✓	
<p>Repairs to any items which have been damaged by the tenant, their family or visitors or which have become damaged through tenant neglect. This includes for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blockages to sinks and toilets caused by misuse (see DIY section on website) • leaks and damage to fittings where this is the result of water spillage by occupants or for example of a washing machine flooding • broken windows 		✓	Unless they have been broken by a third party and immediately reported to the police as criminal damage. You need to provide a crime reference number

Item	SHA role	Tenant role	Exceptions/ comments
Cleaning and maintaining mould caused by condensation		✓	
Negligence of water splash back i.e. kitchen and bathroom etc		✓	
Broken shower hose		✓	We replace every 5 years
Descaling shower head – build up of lime scale		✓	

What to expect from our contractors

Set out below is the agreed 'Code of Conduct' to which all our contractors should work. Tenants who are dissatisfied with the contractor's behaviour or quality of their work, and cannot settle the matter directly with them, should report their complaint as soon as possible to the Maintenance Officer so that the matter can be investigated. Tenants should expect high standards of conduct from a contractor. They should expect to be treated in accordance with SHA's strong emphasis on equal opportunities. Contractors themselves should also expect the same standard of treatment when visiting tenants' homes.

Identification

All contractors or their employees will carry some form of identification, including an official works order from Spitalfield's HA. Spitalfields HA will be happy to verify this if you are in doubt. A contractor carrying out an emergency repair may at times attend without an official works order.

Preparation for works

Tenants are asked to be ready for the contractor's arrival. Easily damaged articles need to be removed and a reasonably clear working area left. The contractor will help tenants move heavy items if requested, and replace them at the end of the job.

Respect for tenants' homes

The contractor is under instructions to respect the homes of tenants and their property whilst working in them. She/he will not use any of the tenant's equipment, their telephone, nor their gas or electricity without first asking permission. The contractor will take every care to make sure your home is secure whilst working there.

Work should be conducted where possible during normal working hours unless we have agreed otherwise with you in advance.

Particular care should be taken when small children are present. Also work should be completed when the tenant or representative is present.

Cleaning Up

Some dirt and inconvenience may be unavoidable as a result of repair work, especially where there is need for re-plastering or major plumbing work. The contractor will take all reasonable precautions to keep this to a minimum whilst working, and will tidy and clean up afterwards. Where this would assist she/he will use clean dustsheets to protect the tenant's property.

Loss and damage

Tenants should report any damage or losses immediately to the contractor. If tenants cannot settle the matter there and then to their satisfaction they should report the matter without delay to the Maintenance Officer.

What they will expect from you

- to be co-operative about making appointments and to give at least 24 hours notice if you cancel an appointment
- to clear the work area of any of your belongings
- to keep your children and pets away from the work area and from the contractors' tools
- to allow contractors to have reasonable use of your gas, electricity and water if necessary

If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of our repairs service, please tell us. We need your views to help us improve our services

Appointments

The Association's responsive maintenance service will provide a tenant focused appointments service. All Urgent (7 days), Priority (14 days) and Routine (28 days) orders will be offered an

appointment. This will be arranged when you first report the repair.

Response times

Emergencies (out of hours)

To be attended within 2 hrs of your call. This might cover for example; complete power loss, flooding, drains blocked so sewage can't escape or back surging, doors or windows made insecure by burglars. No appointments will be made for this category.

Serious plumbing or heating problems

No appointments will be made for this category.

Emergencies (24 hrs)

To be attended within 24 hrs of your call. e.g. complete power loss, flooding, drains blocked so sewage can't escape or back surging, doors or windows made insecure by burglars. No appointments will be made for this category. To be attended and completed within 24 hours.

Serious plumbing or heating problems

No appointments will be made for this category.

Urgent

To be attended and completed within 5 working days of your report. e.g. plumbing/electrical issues. An appointment will be offered.

Priority

To be attended and completed within 14 working days of your report. An appointment will be offered.

Routine

To be completed within 28 calendar days. All other jobs will be placed in this category. An appointment will be offered.

Inspection of repairs

Jobs are normally issued to contractors on the same day they are reported. Where the cause of the problem is unclear and needs investigating an order will be raised for either the Maintenance Officer to carry out an inspection to ascertain the cause and/or to specify what work is required.

Repair enquiry

You may contact SHA at any time to check the progress of a repair. If you wish to do so, please telephone the Maintenance Department on 0800 644 6441. Once you are through please make it clear that you are inquiring about a job that has already been reported. This will speed your enquiry.

However, please allow reasonable time to elapse between reporting the problem and chasing it up. If the repair is routine it will be 3-4 weeks before it will be completed.

Delays

SHA has performance targets to meet and should carry out your repairs within the time-scale set. However, sometimes delays do occur. Examples of reasons are given below.

Your repair could be delayed if:

- the contractor cannot gain access to your home
- an inspection is needed before repairs can be carried out.
- a part has to be ordered to complete the repair.

- several different trades are involved in the repair, e.g. plastering, carpentry and painting

Your right to repair

SHA recognises the resident Right to Repair in accordance with the Housing Corporation's circular 33/94. If we fail to carry out certain repairs without good reason, you can carry them out and claim back money from us. You must have our permission before you start work.

This is known as your Right to Repair and there is a procedure to follow if you want to do this. The scheme is complicated and it is best if you ask advice from the Citizens' Advice Bureau or your solicitor first. We will not make any payment unless you follow our procedure.

For more details of the scheme, please contact us.

As a tenant of SHA you are entitled to repairs being completed within a reasonable time scale. If for some reason a repair is not carried out within a certain time you are entitled to pursue compensation in line with the Right to Repair.

Where a complaint is upheld tenants may claim compensation for a service failure where the lack of repair has affected the health, safety or security of the tenant or a member of the household and where SHA has twice failed to make the repair within the set time scale.

This means that the tenant can claim compensation in the following manner:

- Routine repair – after 56 days.
- Urgent repair – after 14 days.
- Emergency repair – after 48 hours.

Where the complaint is upheld the amount of compensation that may be paid is an initial flat rate of £10.00 plus £2.00 per day until the repair is completed, up to a maximum payment of £50.00.

If you wish to exercise your right to repair or claim compensation SHA will do its best to help you through the procedures. You should contact the Head of Maintenance to discuss the matter.

Insurance

SHA will make an Insurance Claim where there has been damage caused to the building as a result of fire, criminal damage or storms. Where there has been criminal damage the incident must be reported to the police. The claim will be restricted to the building and not the contents e.g. carpets or decorations; these items can be covered by the tenant's own house contents insurance so it is very important that you take out your own contents insurance.

There may be occasions where damage occurs to your belongings as a result of a defect. For example if a leak occurs in the property above yours and your home is flooded you may suffer the loss or damage of a carpet or other contents. In these cases, if Spitalfields HA is not responsible for the cause of the leak, we will not be responsible for paying for the replacement goods. It is therefore extremely important, if you

want to avoid this kind of situation, that you insure your belongings and arrange for home contents cover.

The National Housing Federation has arranged low cost content insurance especially for social housing tenants. This is the My Home contents insurance scheme. It is provided by the National Housing Federation in conjunction with Thistle Tenant Risks and Allianz Insurance plc. This scheme is available for all tenants and residents living in social and affordable housing. Further details of My Home can be obtained through the following ways:

Telephone

0345 450 7288

Email

MyHome@thistleinsurance.co.uk

Online enquiry

www.thistlemyhome.co.uk

However, residents are also advised to get other quotes from other companies for comparison. N.B. SHA is not responsible for offering advice about home contents insurance and cannot become involved in insurance schemes.

Alteration / improvement works

As a tenant of Spitalfields HA you have the right to make improvements to your home, provided that you have obtained our written permission beforehand.

The term 'improvement' covers any alteration or addition including for example:

- changing your kitchen or bathroom fittings
- plumbing in washing machines
- building a porch

- removing internal walls
- fitting double glazing
- installing satellite dish

If you wish to carry out an improvement you must first ask permission by writing to the Housing Officer. This is a requirement of your tenancy agreement.

The association will consider your application very carefully. Spitalfield's HA has the right to impose conditions on the way in which the work is carried out, as do the council departments like building control and planning department.

SHA has the right to refuse a request, but only with good reason, and you will be informed of this in writing. If you do not obtain permission prior to carrying out an improvement or do not observe any conditions laid down by Spitalfield's HA you may be required to reinstate original fittings at your own expense.

Decorating your property

As stated in your tenancy agreement, it is your responsibility to decorate the inside of your home and keep it in good condition at all times. It is especially important that tenants carry out regular maintenance to refresh painted woodwork to the internal aspect of windows. If this is not done it can result in windows rotting and tenants may be held responsible for repair of these items.

It is SHA's responsibility to decorate the outside and any areas shared with other tenants, i.e. "communal areas". For details of the current painting programme please contact the Head of Maintenance.

If you are a senior citizen, or a disabled tenant, and you have no one to help you do your internal decorating, contact your Housing Officer who may be able to put you in touch with a group who can help.

Gardens

If you have a garden, or use of a garden, your tenancy agreement should tell you whether it is exclusively your own, shared with other tenants in your property or part of the grounds of your estate. If it does not and you are unsure please contact your Housing Officer.

If you are responsible in any way for a garden, including trees and hedges you must keep it in reasonable order. If you are a senior citizen or disabled, contact your Housing Officer who may be able to put you in touch with an agency that offers help. If you live on an estate it is likely that Spitalfields has responsibility for any communal gardens and grounds. Spitalfields will hold you responsible for any damage which arises through neglect, carelessness or misuse of the communal areas. You must put right any tenants' damage yourself, or else Spitalfields will carry out the works and then charge you. (Please see section on rechargeable repairs and the section on nuisance.)

Damage to property & rechargeable repairs

Tenants are responsible for correcting any damage they cause in their property. In cases where the damage affects the health and safety of the tenant, repairs will not be carried out unless payment is made in advance.

In cases where the damage poses a health and safety risk to the tenant or neighbouring tenant, or results in

further damage to property, the work will be carried out by SHA. However, the tenant will be responsible for the cost of the repair. If payment is not forthcoming legal action may be taken against you, the tenant, which may lead to the loss of your home.

If we attend a repair, for example, a blocked toilet, and we find any damage has been caused by the property's occupiers or visitors, you will be notified of the problem in writing and advised that you may be recharged.

If you call us to carry out repair that is your responsibility, you will be advised by the Customer Service Repairs Officer who will ask you how the damage occurred.

If the repair is rechargeable to you, you will be advised of the cost of it and you will be asked to pay for the repair before the contractor attends on site.

If you cannot pay the full amount in advance, a deposit amount may be paid and the remittance paid in instalments following the repair. In such circumstances, an administration fee will be applied if a longer payment is required. If the rechargeable repair cost is not paid in full, Spitalfields reserves the right to ensure that the debt can be recovered by application to the county court.

Major repairs

SHA, as well as responding to your requests for repairs on a day to day basis, also has the responsibility to ensure that your property is maintained over the longer term in a way which

looks after your interests as a tenant and safeguards the investment of SHA in our housing stock.

To that end Spitalfields HA invests money to carry out larger and more extensive programmes of improvements or repairs needed to maintain the stock in good condition over the longer term.

SHA currently has a painting programme in place and a programme to renew some central heating systems.

Other examples of larger repair initiatives may include:

- improvement works to kitchens and bathrooms
- roofing works/ renewals
- energy efficiency measures e.g. installation of double glazing

Please note the type of programme chosen depends on priorities and funding available.

Decent homes standard

The Decent Homes Standard is the standard set by the government that all homes must meet. The standard is in place to help ensure that all homes are warm, weather proof and have reasonably modern facilities. Most of the work that would be needed to ensure a property meets the Decent Homes Standard would be carried out under our planned maintenance programme.

Satisfaction

Customer comment on areas such as: conduct of SHA staff, response times, standard of job, and conduct of contractor, will be invited after a

responsive repair has been carried out, and on a sample of customers for major works projects. This data will be analysed and used to refine systems and monitor the performance of staff and contractors.

The repairs service will be a key area within the regular customer satisfaction surveys that SHA will undertake, and will be supplemented by mystery shopping from time to time?

In order to make sure SHA has provided the best customer service we send out satisfaction survey post cards or text. It is essential for tenants to fill out and send these back to us.

Gas safety

By law we must carry out a gas safety check at your property every 12 months. This check is very important for several reasons but the main reason is to ensure your safety and that of your family.

Annual safety checks also help us to ensure that your boiler is running as it should. This helps to ensure it is at its most efficient and makes sure you are not wasting money on high fuel bills. We can also identify any faults or worn out parts and replace them before they fail, helping to ensure that you always have heating and hot water.

The safety check, and any work required will be carried out free of charge. You must allow us access to carry out the annual gas safety check. When your service is due, you will be contacted by our gas engineers. It is important that you confirm the appointment, so that they know that you are available when

they are due to call. If you do not allow access, you may be charged for any costs we have incurred. Our engineers will try to be flexible in offering alternative appointments if you cannot keep the one given.

If you smell gas

If you smell gas, you need to contact The National Grid immediately on 0800 111 999.

You should also follow the advice listed below providing it does not put you at risk:

- switch off your gas at the meter unless the meter is in a cellar or basement
- do not smoke, use matches or any other naked flame
- ventilate the property open doors and windows
- do not use any electric appliances or switches if switches are on, leave them on

Electrical safety

We will carry out routine electricity safety checks at your property. The safety check, and any work required will be carried out free of charge. You must allow us access to carry out this check. When your service is due, you will be contacted by our contractor. It is important that you confirm the appointment, so that they know that you are available when they are due to call. If you do not allow access, you may be charged for any costs we have incurred. If you do not allow us access you are putting yourself and your family at risk. Alternative methods may be used to obtain access to the property, this may include legal steps to gain access.

Water safety at home

In the right conditions harmful bacteria can grow causing an increased risk of Legionnaires disease which is a form of pneumonia that can kill.

Legionnaire's disease mainly affects those who are vulnerable due to age, illness or lowered immune system but can affect anybody. The bacteria can also live in purpose built water systems such as hot and cold water systems, storage tanks, pipe work, taps and showers. The risk of Legionella in your home is very low but the risk is higher when you are moving into a new home or returning after a long break.

To help reduce the risks you should:

- keep your water cistern covered, clean and free from debris
- run your shower or hot water tap continuously for 5 minutes when you move in or return after a long break

We also arrange regular checks of larger water tanks which supply more than one home in some blocks of flats to help reduce the risk. If you need any further advice or have any further questions about water safety please contact the maintenance team

Aids and adaptations

If you need an adaptation to your property to help you remain living there, or to make things easier for you because of your age or impairment, please contact your Housing Officer. Your Housing Officer will be able to discuss the matter with you and give advice on the action required. We may also be able to provide certain minor adaptations to your property.

If you need larger alterations, such as a stair lift, you may need an Occupational Therapist to visit and assess you at home. You can contact an Occupational Therapist through your Local Authority on 020 7364 5984 or 020 7364 5945.

Things to check when you move in

When you move in it is important to:

- report any repairs to us (all repairs should have been done when the property was empty but occasionally things do get missed, let us know of any repairs you find straight away)
- familiarise yourself with the heating operation controls
- find the water stop valve so you can quickly turn off if necessary
- find out when your bin will be collected and if a collection of recycling takes place

Protecting your home from condensation

What is condensation?

Condensation is caused by steam or water vapour when it comes into contact with cold surfaces. Normal activities in the home such as cooking or bathing create a great deal of water vapour which can lead to condensation. If not managed, condensation can cause mould on walls and ceilings. If left untreated condensation and mould can damage clothes, bedding, floor coverings, decorations and the home itself.

Other causes of damp

Condensation is not the only cause of damp; it can also come from leaking pipes, wastes or overflows. Also newly built homes are sometimes damp because of the water used during construction. This is normal and a period of drying out is required. This can sometimes take quite a considerable length of time and requires the property to be both heated and ventilated.

How to reduce condensation

There are some key ways to help reduce condensation and associated problems in your home, and to minimise the production of moisture:

- reduce steam by covering pans when cooking
- dry clothes outside whenever possible or use a self condensing tumble dryer or one which vents outside
- if you do not have a tumble dryer, dry clothes in the bathroom with the door closed and window open and/or extractor fan on
- do not use heaters that run on paraffin or portable flue less gas heaters
- stop moisture spreading through the home-by keeping bathroom and kitchen doors closed and opening windows or using extractor fan
- if you have a cooker hood use this when cooking
- use extractor fans where provided
- keep doors closed when cooking, washing, bathing or drying clothes
- if windows and sills are wet, wipe them dry each morning
- open your windows regularly
- leave trickle vents in windows open

- do not overfill cupboards or wardrobes so that air can circulate
- do not block vents in walls or cupboard doors
- try to position large items of furniture against walls which are internal (i.e. a wall which has rooms on both sides) and always leave a gap between the piece of furniture and the wall
- provide even heating in very cold weather leave your heating on low during the day to maintain an even temperature. This is also a more cost effective way of heating your home
- if you are out all day, use the timer on your heating system to warm your home before you return. This means that surfaces will be warmer when you start to carry out daily tasks such as washing up and therefore reduce the amount of condensation

Treating mould

If condensation in your property does lead to mould you will need to kill and remove the mould. This can be done with diluted bleach or a fungicidal wash (available from most DIY Stores). You must then treat the cause of the mould the condensation using the tips above. This should prevent it returning.

Fire safety

Reduce the Risk

To help prevent fire in your home there are a number of simple steps you can take:

- Keep matches away from children
- Avoid using chip pans and never leave them unattended.
- Do not dry clothes around fires, heaters or cookers
- Do not block vents or grills on heaters

- Close doors at night
- Do not prop fire doors open
- Check smoke detectors are working regularly see section below
- Do not overload plug sockets
- Unplug electrical appliances when not in use
- Do not block exits or escape routes
- Extinguish cigarettes properly and empty ash trays regularly
- Do not keep flammable or explosive substances in your home. This includes bottled gas, paraffin or explosive substances .
- Any work affecting the gas supply or appliances in the property must be carried out by a qualified engineer registered with GasSafe. You must get written permission from us before you arrange for any work to be carried out at your property which affects your gas.
- Plan an escape route from your property in case of fire and keep it clear. Consider how you would evacuate any less mobile members of the household.

The importance of smoke detectors

Smoke Detectors help save lives so it is important that you check yours is working.

The Fire Service recommends that you test your alarm weekly, and that batteries are replaced once a year. You should also check that smoke detectors are clean regularly by vacuuming them.

If you find a problem with a smoke detector that we have provided report it to us immediately. Remember that you are responsible for replacing the batteries.

If you don't have an alarm, the London Fire Brigade(LFB) will fit one free of charge when you have a home fire safety visit. We encourage all residents to request an LFB home free safety check. This can be arranged by calling 0800 028 4428.

Advice for Carers of older people

The majority of fire deaths in the home involve older people. If you have elderly relatives or help care for older people:

- Make sure that smoke alarms have been fitted
- Visit the local CAB or Age UK branch to find out about local groups that can help and
- Make sure that the older person has planned how they would leave the building if there were a fire.

Stay put policy

Certain blocks of flats operate a 'Stay put' policy which follows simple guidelines; you will know if your block operates this policy as there will be clear signs in common areas. The policy involves the following approach:

- Those occupants of the fire origin flat must evacuate the premises and summon the Fire Service.
- If a fire occurs in a common area, any persons in that area should leave the building and call the emergency services.
- All other residents not directly affected by the fire are expected to 'stay put' and are safe to remain in their flats, unless directed to leave by the Fire Service.

Some residents in surrounding flats may wish to evacuate the premises in any case; they should not be prevented from doing so.

If you are unsure and would like further details about the 'stay put' policy, please speak to your Housing Officer.

Keeping your home secure

There are lots of things you can do to help keep your home secure and reduce the risk of a break in.

- always close and lock all windows and doors whenever you leave the property, even if you are not going to be long
- never leave a key hidden outside your home or on a string behind the letterbox
- when you are at home, do not leave keys in doors or close to doors
- do not put a label on your house keys which gives your address
- lock all external gates, sheds and garages
- if you are going away, cancel any newspaper or milk deliveries, also try to ask a friend or relative to keep an eye on your property, i.e. remove mail from the door mat and if possible open and close the curtains
- always check the identity of callers to your home before letting them in Spitalfields Housing Association staff and our contractors should always carry ID which you should ask to see before letting us in
- never leave valuables on display and hide smaller items
- have valuable items photographed and if possible marked, your local Police Station should be able to give you more advice on marking items
- do not leave ladders or tools outside of your home as these can help intruders gain access

- install timers on lights or radios to make it seem that the property is occupied
- if you have a burglar alarm fitted, use it

If you are broken into

If you do get broken into, you should always report this to the Police. If your property is damaged, we will carry out necessary repairs providing you give us a crime reference number.

We will not pay for repairs or replacement of your personal belongings. You should have your own contents insurance to cover this.

Please see the information on Home Contents cover on page 32.



Getting involved

One of our strategic objectives is 'Resident Orientated Services'. This means we want to work with you to improve our services.

Consultation means we will ask for your views before we make major changes to how we manage, maintain or improve your home or neighbourhood. We want you, our tenants and leaseholders, to have a say in the services we provide and how we provide them.

There are many ways you can get involved in how we carry out our services and become more active within the community. The main ones are shown below.

For more information please contact **Murselin Islam** on murselin@spitalfiledsha.co.uk or on 020 7392 5407.

How you can get involved

Mystery Shoppers

We have a trained pool of mystery shoppers, who carry out mystery shops as and when required. This might be commissioned by the Scrutiny Panel to assist in reviewing a particular service or as part of a broader service improvement programme. They provide mystery shops by visiting the office, telephoning and email and these feed into how we can improve our services.

Mystery shoppers receive gift vouchers for taking part. We do not tell our staff who the mystery shoppers are. We need more people to become mystery shoppers.

Influence rating: medium
Time rating: 2-4 hours per shop

Scrutiny Panel

Our Scrutiny Panel reviews services and makes recommendations to us about how to improve them. It is a powerful body which works with us to make things better for all residents. Come and join us.

If you join the scrutiny panel you will:

- increase your skills & gain experience of reviewing services
- learn more about how services are delivered
- receive training
- receive reasonable expenses and recognition vouchers

Influence rating: High
Time rating: approximately equivalent to 5 days per annum

Tenant and Residents Association

A Tenant and Residents' Association is a way for residents to get involved at a local level. A Residents' Association often represents the interests of the local area and can help to bring communities closer together. Typically a Residents' Association may choose to campaign around common issues, as well as organising fun days and social events. We provide support including providing grants where certain criteria are met.

Influence rating: medium
Time rating: 1-2 hours every 2 months

Resident Estate Inspectors

Resident Estate inspectors are trained residents, who carry out inspections on the estate services provided by Spitalfields on behalf of residents. The role of the Resident Estate Inspectors is to check the communal areas for cleanliness and health and safety issues report on whether we are meeting our service standards.

Influence rating:
Medium in the local estate

Time rating:
Approximately 30 minutes per month

Women's Forum

The women's forum is an active group of female residents who express their views on our services. The forum also takes part in various training sessions and workshops which enables them to become more confident and develop personally as well as professionally. The forum is a platform for the female residents to be vocal and independent. The forum also has a place on the board . This forum acts as a stepping stone to other things. They also go on trips and have some fun!

Influence Rating: medium

Time rating: 2 hours per meeting
around 6 times a year

The Youth Forum

The Youth Forum is the forum for our young residents aged 13 to 25. It is committed to working with and for our young residents to get their voice heard and improve their quality of life. Spitalfields has organised activities and events with the Youth Forum including: Volunteering to transform a community garden, Ice skating trip and First Aid training, LBTH increasing voice & representing skills training. They also have an exciting programme for the future.

Influence rating: low/medium

Time rating: 1 hour every 2 months

If you have any ideas, we would like to hear from you. Please contact Shafiqul Islam on 020 7392 5408 or email shafiqul@spitalfieldsha.co.uk



Moving home

If your circumstances have changed and you think your present home is not suitable anymore, there are number of ways you can try to move on.

Homeseekers

You can apply for a housing transfer to move to alternative accommodation. You will need to fill in a housing application form and send the completed form to SHA. If you are not the tenant but a household member, you must send your completed form to Tower Hamlets Letting department.

Once we receive your application, we will process it and will give you a PIN and ID number to 'bid' for empty properties either by telephone, online or in writing.

Moving out of Tower Hamlets

If you are considering moving out of Tower Hamlets to a different part of London, the Housing Moves scheme will be the best option for you.

Housing Moves helps social tenants in London to relocate to other parts of the capital. All council tenants and housing association tenants can apply, as long as they have a secure or assured tenancy. To find out more visit the Housing Moves website www.housingmoves.org.

Finding a home through the normal rehousing system can be difficult and lengthy. Tenants are therefore advised to consider all options when considering a move.

Mutual exchange (HomeSwapper)

You have the right to swap your home with a tenant from Spitalfields HA, another housing association or a local authority. You must get your landlord's permission before you swap homes. There are certain rules that apply, and not everyone will qualify.

Spitalfields HA is a full member of the HomeSwapper mutual exchange scheme, which allows you to search their database properties. You can register for free at www.HomeSwapper.co.uk

Key Workers Scheme

If you are a 'selected public sector worker', sometimes called a 'key worker', and you do not have a social tenancy and/or do not live within a reasonable distance of your workplace, the council may give you additional housing priority.

Please contact **Tonu Miah** for more information on your options for moving house. You can contact Tonu on 020 7392 5420 or at tonu@spitalfieldsha.co.uk.

How to make a complaint

We aim to get our services right first time. However we are aware that there will be times when you are not satisfied and want to complain. We aim to operate an open and accountable complaints system, based on clear service standards.

We welcome complaints as an opportunity to improve our services and commit to a timely response according to each stage of the procedure shown below.

You can complain in any way that suits you, in person, online, my email or on the phone- we do ask that you fill out a short form with details but can help you with that if required.

This policy covers all services provided by us or our contractors. We will not however investigate anonymous complaints or those about an incident that happened a year or more ago.

Complaints procedure

Stage 1

On receipt of your complaint, we will have 2 working days to try to resolve the matter to your satisfaction. This will involve an assessment of whether we/our contractors have met the service standards that we commit to. If you are not happy with the decision at this stage you can ask for it to be escalated to stage 2.

Stage 2

At this stage the Head of the relevant department will review the decision and gather any further evidence they think they might need. They will issue a decision within 10 working days. If you are still not satisfied the complaint can then be escalated to stage 3.

Stage 3

This involves an investigation by the Chief Executive who will convene a panel including at least one Board member to hear the complaint. You can present the complaint yourself or bring an advocate with you to support you. This panel must be convened within 8 weeks and must report its decision back to you within 5 working days of the panel meeting. This is the end of the internal complaints procedure.

Independent Housing Ombudsman

If you are still unhappy with the outcome you can refer your complaint to the Ombudsman who can be contacted at

Housing Ombudsman Service

81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN

T 020 7421 3800
(Lo-call) 0845 7125 973
Minicom: 020 7404 7092
F 020 7836 3900
E info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
www.ihos.org.uk

Or ask a designated person such as your Councillor or M.P. to consider the complaint.

Diversity

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for our residents. Diversity is one of our five values.

We are committed to meeting the needs and aspirations of our customers and communities in a fair, respectful, and proportionate manner.

Equality and diversity are fundamental and integral to everything we do at SHA. We recognise that anyone, regardless of origin or background, can make a positive difference in the achievement of our vision.

Housing

SHA is committed to a policy of equal access to our housing and will ensure that people are treated fairly and equally when they become our tenants. SHA will keep records and regularly monitor our performance. This information will be analysed and action taken to address any needs that have been identified as not being met.

SHA is committed to the right of all tenants to be able to enjoy the peace and comfort of their home, free from any kind of harassment. We have adopted policies and procedures which deal with acts of harassment and will try to meet the needs of victims as they arise. SHA is committed to taking action against known perpetrators of harassment wherever possible. In order to provide a service accessible to all residents, SHA will provide translations into the main community languages on request as well as providing large print, braille or tape on request.

Employment

SHA will make every effort to employ staff from all sections of the community which we serve. When recruiting, SHA will not discriminate against any applicants on the grounds of their ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, religion, marital status, gender or colour. All vacancies will be filled by successful applicants assessed on their ability to do the job.

Training

SHA is committed to developing staff skills by encouraging training to facilitate an environment where staff can realise their full potential. The retention of competent, effective and well-motivated staff is crucial for SHA.

Goods and Services

SHA will seek to use its spending power to further our Diversity Policy. We will ensure that contractors, consultants and suppliers adhere to our Diversity Policy. No pornographic or offensive material should be displayed in any location associated with SHA including offices, site accommodation etc.

Useful numbers

Housing, Debt and Welfare Benefits Advice

Citizens Advice Bureau

32 Greateorex Street,
Whitechapel E1 5NP
Tel: 020 7247 1050
www.eastendcab.org.uk

Toynbee Hall Advice Service

28 Commercial Street, E1 6LS
Tel: 020 7392 2953
E advice@toynbeehall.org.uk
www.toynbeehall.org.uk

Bromley by Bow Centre

St Leonards Street
London E3 3BT
T 020 8709 9737
www.bbhc.org.uk

Island Advice Centre

Island House
Roserton Street E14 3PG
Tel: 020 7987 9379
www.island-advice.org.uk

National Debt Line

0800 808 4000

Getting on with money project

Gettingonwithmoney@bbbc.org.uk -
a local project for money
and debt advice.

Employment Support and Advice

Krypton Training

2nd Floor, 78 Quaker Street
London E1 6SW
Tel: 020 7375 3843
www.kryptontraining.co.uk
E admin@kryptontraining.co.uk

Support To Employment Program (STEP)

Gateway Housing Association
409-413 Mile End Road
London E3 4PB
T 020 8709 4499
E STEP@gatewayhousing.org.uk

Bromley by Bow Centre

Employment Support and Advice
Local People: Local Jobs
St Leonard's Street
London E3 9BT
T 020 8709 9748

Utilities

My Home Energy Switch

Help with comparing energy suppliers to make sure you are getting the best price for gas and electricity.

T 0800 051 5346

www.myhomeenergyswitch.org.uk

Council Services - Hotlines

Tower Hamlets Council Town Hall

Mulberry Place

5 Clove Crescent

London E14 2BG

Housing Benefits

(applications & advice)

0207 364 5001

Council Tax

0207 364 5002

Parking Services, incl abandoned vehicles

0207 364 5003

Bulk refuse collection

A free service for those on housing benefits

0207 364 5004

Adult Social Care

0207 364 5005

Children's Services

0207 364 5006

Pests and Noise Nuisance

0207 364 5007

Environmental Health

0207 364 5008

Healthcare, incl finding a GP or health facility

0207 364 5016

General Enquiries

0207 364 5020

Residents in Newham should contact Newham Council.

Other Useful Numbers

For Details of your local Safer Neighbourhood Unit or all other non urgent Police issues please ring 101.

Spitalfields Housing Association

78 Quaker Street
London
E1 6SW

T 020 7392 5400

F 020 7392 5401

E admin@spitalfieldsha.co.uk

www.spitalfieldsha.co.uk

