

The Hyde Group

Residents' Handbook



The Hyde Group
Making a lasting difference

Welcome to The Hyde Group

The Group is comprised of five registered providers (RPs) of social housing, one of which will be your landlord. These are;

- Hyde Housing Association Limited (the parent body);
- Hyde Southbank Homes Limited;
- Hillside Housing Trust Limited;
- Martlet Homes Limited; and
- Minster General Housing Limited

The Hyde Group owns and manages more than 45,000 homes across London, the East Midlands, the East and the South East England.

They are managed by the seven businesses:

1. Hyde South East

Manages Hyde Housing Association homes in South East London and Kent, and leases and manages properties from private landlords for temporary accommodation.

2. Hyde Martlet

Our operation in the South of England that partners Hyde Housing Association with Martlet Homes and covers Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

3. Hyde Southbank

Owns and manages homes and community facilities in the London Borough of Lambeth.

4. Hyde Northside

Owns and manages homes and community facilities in the London Borough of Islington.

5. Hyde Hillside

Owns and manages homes and community facilities of Hillside Housing Trust in the London Borough of Brent.

6. Hyde Minster

Manages Minster General Housing Association and Hyde Housing Association homes across the east of England and East Midlands.

7. Roundshaw Homes

Manages a hundred homes for Hyde Housing Association in the London Boroughs of Merton and Sutton.

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Part 1: For all residents

1. Welcome to your new home

The information in this handbook will help you enjoy your new home. It includes important information about your tenancy and other useful topics such as moving home, paying your rent, pest control, keeping pets, your neighbours and parking.

Keep the handbook in a safe place so that you can refer to it when you need to. **For more information about any of our services, please contact your local Hyde office, contact details can be found at the back of this handbook.**

We hope that you will enjoy living in your new home.

2. Service Promise – our commitment to you

Our aim is for you to enjoy living in your new home, and that is why we are committed to providing you with an excellent service at all times.

We have set standards and targets for the areas of service that residents have told us are the most important. Examples of the promises we make include how quickly we will respond to your repairs requests, and targets for letting empty homes, as well as those for dealing with customer enquiries. The standards are designed to provide the highest quality service, meeting resident needs within available resources.

We have published these standards with targets in a leaflet called *Our Service Promise – Our promise to you*. A copy of the leaflet is included with this handbook.

The Hydewide Residents' Voice helped set these standards, and the Hydewide Residents' Eye will check regularly that we are meeting them. Each of the standards has a clear measure agreed so that the Hydewide Residents' Eye can check how we are doing and report back to you each year.

3. Complaints

We aim to provide the best possible service to all our residents and customers. There may be times, however, when you feel that you have not been treated fairly or that we have failed to provide the level of service we promised.

Complaints help us to improve our service and find out where things have gone wrong.

3.1 You should complain because...

We encourage all our residents and customers to give us feedback, especially if it helps us to improve the service you receive.

Since we welcome all comments and complaints, we can assure you that your rights will not be affected.

What is a complaint?

We will always try to resolve a request for a service the first time you report it to us. This could be a repair, or some information that you need.

If you are not happy with our response, the service we have provided, or our efforts to resolve your query, you can ask us to log a complaint.

This could be a failure to do what we said we would do, or perhaps you are unhappy with the way in which you were treated. Examples of a complaint include:

- The length of time taken to provide the information or the service that you need
- The attitude or behaviour of our staff or contractors
- Our failure to keep you informed of a decision we made
- Any kind of discrimination
- The level of service we provided.

What is not covered by the Complaints Policy?

There are some types of requests that are not covered by the Complaints Policy.

For example, if you want to make a report of anti-social behaviour, we have special procedures to deal with nuisances and harassment that can be found later in this handbook.

If your complaint is about something that cannot be resolved by the Complaints Policy, we will explain why and make sure that the right team is dealing with it.

If your complaint is about a service failure that occurred over 12 months ago, we will not be able to investigate that complaint.

Who can complain?

Anyone who uses or receives a service from any part of The Hyde Group can complain.

How do I make a complaint?

If you would like to make a complaint, please contact our Customer Services Team:

- By telephone
- By email
- By writing to a Hyde Group office
- By visiting a Hyde Group office
- By completing and returning the complaints form in our Guide for Residents: *Making a Complaint* (code: HG-LCON Making a Complaint)
- By completing the online form on our website at: www.hyde-housing.co.uk
The Guide for Residents can also be downloaded from our website.

Please let us know if you need help in making a complaint. We can organise interpreting services, Braille and signing facilities.

3.2 The complaints process

We will acknowledge all complaints within two working days if they cannot be resolved immediately.

We aim to respond to all formal complaints within 10 working days. If we need more time to carry out an investigation or to gather further information, we will let you know or agree how long it will take to send you a full response.

How is my complaint handled?

We telephone all our customers as part of the process of resolving a complaint. Alternatively, you can specify how you would like to be contacted.

• Stage 0 – Get It Right Now

Most of the time, you just want us to put things right, so if we receive a complaint, we will try to resolve it within two working days where possible. We will focus on sorting the problem out quickly with no need for a written response. For example, it may be possible to resolve your complaint immediately at the time you report it.

If the complaint requires a full investigation, we will respond at Stage 1 in writing.

• Stage 1 (Investigation & Response)

The team responsible for the service you have complained about will investigate and respond to you within 10 working days.

• Stage 2 (Senior Manager Review)

The Resolution Team will arrange for a senior manager to review your complaint and respond to you within 10 working days.

• Stage 3 (Independent Review)

The Resolution Team will arrange for a complaint review panel or a Director to review the handling of your complaint at Stages 1 and 2.

If you are still unhappy with the service and the responses that you have been given, this is an opportunity for you to discuss the issues with someone who is independent from the service failure.

The purpose of a panel is to review whether the decisions made were appropriate to the complaint case and to check that we followed our policies.

You do not need to be present. If you prefer, you can ask someone else to attend in your place.

We will contact you within 10 working days to arrange a panel hearing, although we may recommend a review of your complaint by a Director if this promotes a faster resolution.

Resolving a complaint

At each stage we ask you to let us know within four weeks whether you are satisfied with the outcome or whether you wish to progress to the next stage. After four weeks, your complaint will be closed.

At any time during the complaint process, we may choose to deal with your case differently. In rare cases, we may close your complaint if the resolution you need is unreasonable or not possible.

We will always explain why a decision was made to deal with your complaint differently and, where possible, provide an alternative way to resolve your complaint.

Where can I go after Stage 3?

If you feel that your complaint is still not resolved after we have closed your complaint, there are a number of organisations you can contact to have your case reviewed:

• Housing Ombudsman Service

If your complaint is about the way we managed your property, you can ask the Housing Ombudsman Service to review your case. The Ombudsman will only consider complaints that have completed our complaints process.

Independent Housing Ombudsman
81 Aldwych
London WC2B 4HN
Phone: 0300 111 3000 Fax: 020 7831 1942
Textphone: 020 7404 7092
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

3.3 Comments and feedback

You can leave us your comments and feedback on our service on our website or by using our feedback form (code: HG-LCON Compliments, Feedback & Suggestions). Contact your local Customer Services Team for a copy of this form. Contact details can be found at the back of this handbook.

4. Our services

We are committed to providing our services locally to make sure that our residents can continue to use them. **For more information about any of our services, please contact your local Hyde office, contact details can be found at the back of this handbook.**

4.1 Customer Services

Our Customer Services Team aims to help solve most of your initial enquiries at the first point of contact. This team logs complaints and anti-social behaviour reports, and provide information on rent and transfers. It also delivers the repairs service through our approved Repairs Contractors and our Property Services Officers.

4.2 Neighbourhood Team

The Neighbourhood Team takes the lead in ensuring residents' experiences of their home and neighbourhood meet their aspirations. This is done through:

- Managing lettings and allocations
- Tackling anti-social behaviour
- Managing tenancy issues and estates
- Providing frontline services to tenants and leaseholders
- Developing strong partnerships with local stakeholders

4.3 Income Team

Our Income Team works on all matters surrounding rental income, and leasehold and service charges. This includes financial welfare and advice on benefits, debt management and other financial issues. We also have a dedicated Leasehold and Service Charges Team who specialise in the coordination of services in these areas.

4.4 Temporary Housing

The Temporary Housing Team is a specialist team offering a generic service for temporary housing tenants. Officers are responsible for all rent and tenancy issues.

Temporary housing tenants in London and Kent should contact Hyde South East, at the Lewisham office. Tenants in Brighton and Hove should contact Hyde South, at the Hove office.

4.5 Property Services

This is a specialist team of Surveyors and Property Services Technical Officers. The team carries out inspections and monitors our responsive repairs service. It also manages our cyclical works and major stock investment programmes.

4.6 Resident Engagement Team

This team takes the lead in developing ways of effectively involving our residents in shaping our services.

4.7 Housing Support Officers

Hyde South East has Housing Support Workers in London who are employed to help residents with welfare matters. For example, they can give you advice on benefits, how to deal with debt, and adaptations for elderly or disabled people. They can also offer help and support to victims of domestic abuse, harassment or hate crime.

4.8 Resettlement Workers

There are Resettlement Workers in London that help people who have lived in hostels and group homes to settle into their own self-contained accommodation.

5. Moving in

5.1 Tips for moving house

It is very important that you contact the appropriate agencies and services to avoid losing money or putting your personal security at risk:

- Change your address details with the bank, the Benefits Agency, your employer and any other service that you use.
- If you are receiving Council Tax Benefit or Housing Benefit, tell the council your new address and the date that you are moving in.
- Contact your gas, electricity and water suppliers (see the numbers below for current suppliers) to confirm that you have changed address. Take a meter reading and give this to the company who supply the services. Remember, you choose who supplies your electricity and gas, and the existing utility provider will have put you on their standard (most expensive) tariff.
- If your new home is on a prepay meter, consider asking the utility provider to change it as soon as possible – prepay customers usually pay hundreds of pounds more each year.
- You can get help and advice on choosing the right supplier and energy tariff from **Hyde Plus**, call **Freephone: 0800 030 4424**
- Arrange home contents insurance for your own fixtures, fittings and personal belongings. Please read on for more details.
- Get spare keys cut straight away, as we do not keep any.

5.2 Finding out who currently supplies services to your home

- To find out who supplies your electricity, call **0845 601 5467**
- To find out who supplies your gas, call **0870 608 1524**

They will ask for your postcode and house number, and will then give you the details of the current supplier.

5.3 Home contents insurance

Our own insurance covers the building you live in, but not the contents (such as your personal belongings or furniture). Because of this, you should take out a policy that covers the personal contents of your home against theft, fire, flood, accidental damage and so on. Your insurance should cover all your personal belongings, including clothes, decorations, furniture, electrical appliances, jewellery and so on.

When you move into your new home, your Housing Officer will give you a leaflet offering you affordable 'pay as you go' home contents insurance.

For affordable contents insurance with a variety of payment options, we endorse the National Housing Federation's 'My Home Contents Insurance'. To find out more about this scheme contact:

Tel: 0113 203 5817

Email: myhome@jltgroup.com

We strongly recommend that you arrange your own home contents insurance.

6. Rent (tenants only) and service charges

As part of our rent and service charge procedures, we will:

- Give you clear, easy-to-read rent and service charge statements
- Reply to your questions about your rent or service charge within 10 working days
- Give you advice if you owe rent, including helping you claim Housing Benefit and referring you to appropriate agencies that can help
- Make sure you pay your rent promptly, and sort out any difficulties at an early stage
- Take all reasonable steps – including legal action, if necessary – to recover rent owed to us

6.1 Reviewing your rent

Assured tenants

We will review your rent on the first Monday in April each year.

Secure tenants

Secure tenants pay what are known as 'fair rents'. These are set by an independent official every two years, and are based on the rent for assured tenancies. We will set the rent at, or below, the level set by the local Rent Officer.

If we plan to increase your rent, we will give you at least four weeks' notice before we do so.

Right to appeal

You have a right to appeal if you do not think we have followed the procedure for setting rent (as set out above), or if we have made a mistake.

If you are a secure tenant, you can appeal to the Rent Assessment Committee (which is independent from us), which may set a new amount of rent. If the new rent is higher than the one originally registered with the Rent Officer, we will continue to charge the lower rent.

6.2 Service charges

What is a service charge?

A service charge is a payment towards the cost of the services you receive to maintain your home. This is a charge on top of your rent, and covers the cost of the services we provide.

What services does the service charge cover?

This depends on what your tenancy agreement with us says. The service charge covers the following services:

- The cost of employing a caretaker
- The cost of cleaning shared areas, including cleaning windows and removing dumped rubbish
- The cost of cutting grassed areas and looking after planted areas
- The cost of repairs to shared facilities such as door-entry systems, television aerials and lighting
- The cost of providing and repairing lifts, including the cost of contracts and insurance
- The cost of providing fire-fighting equipment, including repairing and testing emergency lighting and smoke alarms
- The cost of providing water, electricity and gas supplies to shared areas

What are 'provisions'?

Some large items (for example, door-entry systems or lifts) need to be replaced from time to time. To plan for this, and to avoid charging you all the costs at once, we collect regular amounts for these expenses and put the funds in an interest-earning bank account until they are needed. We call these funds 'provisions', but you may also have seen them called 'reserves' or a 'sinking fund' in other publications. If your service charge includes provisions, you will receive a separate provisions statement with your service charge statement.

Why do you charge a management fee?

This fee covers our cost of working out and managing the service charge. It is normally 15% of the total amount we charge for the services we provide, but does not include the cost of insurance or providing gas, water or electricity supplies to shared areas.

How do you work out and collect service charges?

Your tenancy agreement sets out whether you pay a fixed or variable service charge.

Variable: Most Hyde residents are charged a variable service charge, which can be charged in accordance with their tenancy agreement. Variable service charges are based on actual costs. At the end of the financial year, the statement will show whether the scheme has under-or overspent.

Fixed: Some Hyde residents pay a fixed service charge, which is based on Hyde's calculation of the scheme's costs for a particular year. Fixed rate service charges cannot be varied, and residents will not see any under-or overspend figures on their statement.

Each year, a service charge budget is set for each scheme. This is an estimate of the services we will provide in the coming year and their costs. When doing this, we aim to keep costs down and provide value for money.

We send residents details of the budget, broken down into clear headings. We do this each February for charges that will start from the following April. We will ask for your views on the budget and consider any comments before we agree the budget. The letter sent with the budget will show how much you will pay and when you must pay it.

Within six months of the end of the financial year, we will send you a statement showing the actual cost of our services in the previous year, broken down under the same headings as used in the budget. This will be either certified (approved) by a qualified accountant or independently audited, depending on the conditions of your tenancy agreement with us. More detailed information can be found in our Guide for Residents: *Service Charge* (code: HG-LTEN Service Charge).

Management companies

On some estates, the services are provided by a private company who charge us. We then pass the cost on to residents.

How much do I pay?

The amount you pay will depend on whether you pay for estate services (shared areas on an estate), block services (shared areas in the block your property is in) or both. The share of the total costs you pay will be set out in your tenancy agreement with us.

How can I be involved?

We will regularly consult all residents about the services we provide. We encourage you to give us feedback on the services we provide.

We must consult you when our spending is over a certain amount. For repairs to the building, the amount is £250 for each property. For long-term contracts (for example, contracts to clean or service lifts) the amount is £100 a year for each property.

What can I do if I cannot pay the service charge?

Contact your local office and discuss your circumstances:

- If you are on a low income, you may be able to apply for Housing Benefit.
- If you bought your home under the Right-To-Buy scheme or the Right-To-Acquire scheme, you may be able to get a loan for the service charge.

What can I do if I'm not happy with my service charge?

We aim to provide a service that meets your needs and offers value for money. If you do not think we have done this, please contact your local office. We will then investigate the matter.

What do I do if I need more information?

This is only a general guide, and does not cover every arrangement we make with residents for how they pay service charges. If you need more detailed information, please contact your local office.

6.3 How to pay your rent and service charge

You must pay your rent and service charge regularly in advance. At the start of your tenancy, we will ask you which method of payment you want to use. You can decide to change your payment method at a later date.

1. The payment card

You can use these at any Post Office or local shop which displays a Pay Point sign. Give the cashier your payment (swipe) card and your money.

The money will go into your account within 48 hours. Always keep your receipt as proof.

If you lose your card, please contact your local office straight away to order a replacement.

2. Internet Banking

If you want to pay on the internet you will need to know who your Hyde Group landlord is. Our bank details are as follows:

Hyde Housing Association Limited

Sort code: 57 34 35 Account number: 00000000

Hyde Southbank Homes Limited

Sort code: 57 01 02 Account number: 00000000

Hillside Housing Trust Limited

Sort code: 62 30 04 Account number: 00000000

Martlet Homes Limited

Sort code: 62 30 83 Account number: 00000000

Minster General Housing Limited

Sort code: 62 30 34 Account number: 00000000

Please quote your payment reference number. If you are not sure what this is, please ask your local housing office. Alternatively, you can pay online at **www.allpayments.net**.

3. Debit or credit card

To pay by debit or credit card, call your local office or call **Allpay.net Ltd** on **Tel: 0844 557 8321** (24 hours a day).

Please have the following information ready to use:

- Your swipe card
- Your credit or debit card details

4. Standing order

You can get forms for standing order payments from your local housing office. You are responsible for making any changes to the amount you pay, according to the current level of rent.

5. Direct debit

You can arrange to pay by direct debit through your local housing office, either by telephone or in person. The amounts can be amended by us to take into account any rent increases. Any amendments are notified to you in writing prior to being taken.

6. Cheque

We prefer you not to pay by cheque, but if this is your preferred payment method, please contact your local housing office for further details, as the payee name varies from property to property.

7. Text message

You can pay your rent which your mobile phone using the Text Payment service from All Pay. This is a secure method of paying your rent that gives you the flexibility to pay it when and where you want to.

To begin text payments, you simply need a UK-registered mobile phone, a valid All Pay swipe card and a current debit or credit card.

After a very brief registration online at **www.allpayments.net/textpay**, you can pay your rent and service charge at any time by texting a simple code and the amount you wish to pay to **81025**.

6.4 Difficulties with paying the rent

Your rent is one of the most important bills that you have to pay. However if, for any reason, you have financial problems and are unable to pay the rent and service charge, you must tell your Income Officer immediately.

Your Income Officer will be able to offer help with budgeting your finances, and can also refer you to other agencies who will be able to help you. They may be able to help you come to an agreement with the people you owe money to, and can check that you are getting all the benefits you may be entitled to.

Your Income Officer will make an arrangement with you to pay any rent you still owe as soon as possible. They will make sure the payments are at a level you can afford.

If you are in the process of making a claim for Housing Benefit, we understand that this will take time. However, we may need to begin action against you if the delay is as a result of something you have or haven't done (for example, if you have not given the local authority all the evidence they need to process your claim).

We will help you as much as possible. However, as the tenant, it is your responsibility to make sure you pay your rent. If you do not keep to any agreement you have made with us, we may take further action (including legal action) against you.

6.5 Legal action

If we cannot reach an agreement, or you fail to keep to an agreement that we have made with you, we will start legal action. We start this process by serving you with a 'Notice of Intention to Seek Possession'. If we start legal action, you could lose your home. However, this is rarely the case, as we will continue to try to contact you to discuss a way of paying the rent you owe. If you pay the rent, we may be able to postpone court action.

If you receive a Notice, you must contact your Income Officer immediately to come to an arrangement to pay your rent. If you do not pay back any amount of rent you owe, we will continue with court action.

The Notice will stay in force for 12 months. If you fall behind with paying your rent during this time, we can apply to the court.

6.6 Court action

Once a Notice has run out (after the original 28 day period), we will continue with legal action if:

- You have failed to contact us; or
- You do not keep to an agreement to pay the rent you owe.

In some cases, the judge will have the authority to decide whether or not to grant us the order we have applied for. You may still have to pay the court costs (around £100). However, if you have missed your rent payments for more than eight weeks, we may be able to begin legal action on 'Ground 8', which means that we will automatically be granted permission to take possession of your home. We will only take this action if you fail to work with us to pay the rent you owe.

6.7 Eviction

Once the judge has granted us permission to take possession, we will then arrange for a bailiff to evict you from your home. We will no longer have a responsibility to rehouse you. Please also remember that, by failing to pay the rent you owe, you may have made yourself intentionally homeless and the local authority may not have a duty to rehouse you.

7. Anti-social behaviour and harassment

Most people live happily alongside their neighbours and do not experience any difficulties. However, we can help you if you need support or believe you are being disturbed or threatened in any way.

7.1 What is anti-social behaviour?

The government defines anti-social behaviour as:

“Behaviour which causes (or is likely to cause) harassment, alarm or distress to one or more people not of the same household.”

It can range from inconsiderate parking and dumping rubbish, to acts of violence. Firstly, we encourage any resident experiencing anti-social behaviour to sort out the problem informally by talking to their neighbours. If this is not possible, please contact us for help.

7.2 Different forms of anti-social behaviour

There are many different forms of anti-social behaviour, including:

- Abusive or insulting words or behaviour
- Intimidating or assaulting someone
- Violence or threats of violence
- Loud noise
- Using, selling or handling drugs
- Using or allowing your property to be used for illegal or immoral purposes such as prostitution and handling or storing stolen goods
- Dumping rubbish and misusing shared areas
- Pets causing nuisance or annoyance (for example, barking dogs)

You are responsible for making sure that your family and friends do not act in an anti-social way.

7.3 Racial harassment

Racial harassment is when one person acts or behaves in a way that offends, intimidates or distresses another person, and is based on the differences due to the other person's colour, culture or ethnic background.

We treat all incidents as racist if the victim or the person reporting it sees it as racist. This behaviour is unacceptable, and we will work with the victims to offer support and produce a plan of action together.

7.4 Hate crime

A hate crime is a criminal offence against an individual or property based on one person's hate towards another because of the other person's 'protected characteristics'. This covers age, sex, race, religion, sexuality, disability or ethnic background. There must be evidence to show that the behaviour is based on one person's hate towards the other.

7.5 Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship together, or between family members, no matter what their age, sex, race or sexuality.

We appreciate that it can be difficult to ask for help, but if you are a victim of domestic abuse, or you are concerned that a friend, relative or neighbour is being abused, please contact your local office.

We take these reports very seriously and have a number of policies and procedures in place to provide help.

Please contact your Housing Officer if you are suffering from racial harassment, domestic abuse, or any other form of hate crime.

7.6 What we will do

- We will discuss your concerns fully with you and take as much information as possible. We can do this when you contact us, or we can make an appointment for you to discuss the situation face-to-face with your Housing Officer if you would prefer this.
- Your Housing Officer will discuss what options are available, and will agree with you what action to take.
- Your support and help will allow us to investigate and deal with your concerns far more effectively. We may also ask you to keep a record of what is going on, and we will provide you with diary sheets to help you do this.
- In many cases, there are no easy or quick solutions but we will discuss any action with you before we do anything.

It is important that we deal with the matter fairly, which will usually involve us talking to the person who you claim has carried out the anti-social behaviour to get their view of the situation. We will not make your identity known if you ask us not to, but in some cases this may limit our ability to deal with the case. We will discuss and agree what options are available with you before taking any action.

Many different organisations and agencies have experience and legal powers in dealing with anti-social behaviour in specialist areas (for example, environmental health officers in tackling noise nuisance). We will work with these other agencies if doing so will help us to deal more effectively with tackling the anti-social behaviour.

We will offer you support or put you in touch with support services to help you if appropriate. If you would like guidance on what is available, contact your local office.

In serious cases, we may be able to offer extra security improvements to your home, or offer you other accommodation (depending on whether this is available).

We will take legal action if appropriate, and depending on whether we have enough supporting evidence. This may involve you going to court to give evidence. We will discuss this with you first.

7.7 What we need from you

- We need you to let us know about any incident as soon as possible.
- We will need you to help us gather evidence to support your report. This may involve keeping a record of any incidents that take place.
- We may need you to go to court at a later date if legal action is necessary.

8. Living in blocks of flats

We aim to promote respect and tolerance among all our residents. Please keep this in mind while you read this section.

8.1 The no-smoking law: how it affects you as one of our residents

Since 1 July 2007, it has become illegal to smoke in enclosed public spaces. This includes shared areas inside blocks of flats. We have displayed signs inside all our blocks of flats, and your Housing Officer will regularly check to make sure that residents are keeping to the law.

8.2 Laminate flooring

You need our permission before you make any changes or improvements to your home. We do not recommend laying laminate flooring because of the noise that this can create for other residents living in the flats nearby. We recommend instead that you lay suitable carpets and underlay (material laid under a carpet for protection or support).

8.3 Noise

Noise travels easily between homes, particularly within blocks of flats. Please limit the noise you create from things such as your washing machine, television or stereo, particularly during unsocial hours (early in the morning and late at night).

You will be breaking the conditions of your tenancy if you carry out any activity that causes a genuine nuisance to your neighbours.

If you are having any problems with your neighbours, please see section 7, *Anti-social behaviour and harassment*, in this handbook.

8.4 Rubbish

Please get rid of rubbish as soon as you can. Do not leave it in shared halls or stairwells, as this can cause health and safety risks, including people tripping and the risk of the rubbish catching fire.

If you have a rubbish chute, please consider your neighbours and do not use it between 11pm and 7am. You should take any large item to a council dump, or contact your local council to arrange for them to collect it.

8.5 Shared halls and stairwells

Please do not keep your belongings in halls and stairwells. If you leave items in shared areas and they put other residents at risk, we will remove the items and charge you for this.

8.6 Door-entry systems

These are systems that are installed to keep the block secure. Do not let anyone into the block if you do not know them. Check that contractors and callers have identification before you let them in.

8.7 Aerials and satellite dishes

Most flats have a shared aerial that you and other residents pay for through the service charge. We are usually not able to grant permission for individual satellite dishes because of planning restrictions.

9. Repairs and maintenance

We aim to improve our repairs and maintenance services by:

- Keeping to our repairs policy when carrying out all repairs and planned and regular maintenance work
- Meeting our legal duty to check and service your gas appliances every year if you rent your home from us
- Monitoring our services by visiting and phoning 10% of the homes that have had repairs or maintenance work done to check the standard of the finished work
- Redecorating the outside of your home (as part of our redecorations programme), in line with our cyclical programme, every five to seven years depending on where you live
- Offering you advice on simple home repairs

If you would like a copy of our Repairs Policy, please contact your local office.

9.1 Our responsibilities

Buildings

We are responsible for maintaining and repairing the structure and outside of properties and shared areas. This includes:

- Foundations, roofs, chimney stacks, outside walls, window sills, window frames, gutters and outside pipes
- Inside walls, skirting boards, door frames, doors, plasterwork, ceilings and floors.
- Fitted cupboards and kitchen units (if provided by us)
- Access routes including pathways and steps, boundary walls and fencing, gates and rubbish facilities that we have put in place, such as bin stores
- Garages, outside stores and outbuildings (if provided by us)
- Painting outside as part of our maintenance programme, unless the property is due to have improvements carried out to it

Services

We are responsible for maintaining electricity, gas, water and sanitation services. (This applies only to service pipework and appliances that we have installed.) These services include:

- Electrical wiring, sockets and light fittings (except if you have put them in yourself) – it does not include fuses, bulbs or your own electrical equipment
- Water heaters, fitted gas fires and central-heating systems
- Baths, showers (except if you have put them in yourself), toilets, sinks, basins and taps
- Gas and water pipes

Shared areas

We will repair and maintain the shared areas inside and outside our properties. This includes:

- Decorating hallways and entrances (in some properties, this also includes cleaning these areas)
- Lighting
- Lifts and door-entry systems
- Shared television aerials
- Alarm systems (fitted by us)
- Footpaths and lighting (where these are only for use by our residents)
- Playgrounds, parking areas, grounds and gardens that are our responsibility

We will also make sure that all firefighting equipment we supply is suitable, regularly inspected and serviced.

9.2 Your responsibilities

Carrying out minor repairs

These include small jobs inside your home such as the following:

- Replacing or repairing plugs in sinks, washers on taps, toilet seats and lids, shower hoses, starter motors for strip lights, fuses, light bulbs, doorbells, broken glass to doors and windows, keys and locks, cupboard catches and hinges, and installing and adding jackets to cylinders and fire ignition units
- Redecorating inside your home and keeping the decoration in good condition
- Maintaining fixtures and fittings, such as curtain and dado rails and other fittings that you have installed
- Treating household pests and infestations such as ants, slugs and mice inside your home
- Clearing blockages in waste pipes and toilets caused by a lack of care; these blockages can be caused by putting fat, oil, paint, hair, disposable nappies, vegetable peelings, sanitary towels or any other bulky items down the pipe or toilet
- Keeping airbricks and ventilators clear.
- Changing filters in ventilation systems and cooker hoods
- Setting heating controls and relighting boilers.
- Taking reasonable care to protect your home from damage caused by fire, frost or water
- Carrying out any repairs that are caused by misusing something (for example, damage caused by water overflowing from baths, sinks, basins and appliances)
- Avoiding storing large amounts of materials or gases that catch fire easily
- Carrying out repairs to any improvements that you have carried out
- Maintaining private gardens or private entrances if these are used solely by you
- Making minor repairs to fencing
- Making minor repairs to plaster (e.g. filling in small holes/cracks prior to decorating it)

We will take action against you if you do not maintain your home properly, or cause damage or inconvenience to your neighbours. If another resident is causing you inconvenience, contact your Housing Officer.

Access to your property

We need to be able to go into your home from time to time to inspect or repair your property, or to carry out gas and electrical installation safety checks. We will contact you and arrange a suitable time to visit your home.

We may also have to enter your home without your permission in extreme emergencies such as a flood or fire. Your tenancy agreement gives us the right to do this without your permission or where you are not available to let us in.

9.3 Gas servicing

We have a duty, by law, to check your gas appliances. A boiler that is not regularly serviced costs more to run, and faults in your appliances can cause carbon-monoxide poisoning, which can kill.

What happens if you fail to let us in to service your gas appliances?

If you do not let us into your property to carry out these checks, we will be able to take a number of steps, including:

- Refusing to carry out any other repairs that you may need to your property
- Refusing to consider any requests made to transfer homes (if this applies), until we have serviced your gas appliances
- Passing your details to our legal representatives, who will apply to the court for an injunction and for you to pay any costs (this could be around £1,500)

You will also risk being evicted from your property.

9.4 How to report a repair

To help us provide an efficient repairs service, we need you to:

- Report any problems as soon as possible
- Give us as much detail as possible about the problem
- Tell us how we can contact you
- Tell us when we can get into the property to carry out the repair

Once you have reported a repair, we will send you a copy of the repair order giving details of the work we will carry out, the contractor responsible and the date the work must be done by.

Ways to report repairs

1. By telephoning the Customer Services Team. The number can be found at front of this handbook.
2. By completing the online form on our website at: **www.hyde-housing.co.uk**. However, we encourage you to do this only for repairs that are not urgent. For emergencies and urgent repairs, you should phone the Customer Services Team immediately.
3. By writing to us with full details of the repairs and how to contact you. Send your letter to your local office – the address is at the front of your handbook.
4. By visiting your local office. We may need to visit your home to check what repairs are needed. The visit may be from a Surveyor, a Technical Officer or your Housing Officer.

Once our contractor has carried out the repairs, we may also inspect them to make sure that they have been carried out to a satisfactory standard.

9.5 Timescales for carrying out repairs

Emergency repairs – dealt with within 24 hours

- Repairing faults that put your health at risk or could damage the property further (for example, a total failure in your electricity or water supply, a gas leak, the toilet not working when there is only one in the property, burst pipes or blocked drains)
- Providing heating during winter months for frail or elderly tenants or households with young children
- Any repair that prevents serious risk to people's health. This only applies to the work that is needed to make the repair safe and further repair work may be finished later

Urgent repairs – dealt with within seven days

- Repairs that stop water leaks
- Plumbing such as sinks, heating systems, and baths if they cannot be used
- Repairs needed to keep your home secure
- Faulty wiring or electrics
- Missing roof slates or tiles that cause water to enter the home

Non-urgent repairs – dealt with within 28 days

- Repairs that are not an immediate health or safety risk
- Broken gutters, inside doors, fixtures and fittings, minor plumbing jobs and plastering

Exceptions

- External redecorating
- Major repairs
- In some cases, we will move repairs into a more urgent category; this could be if you have problems walking or getting around, learning difficulties, mental health problems or severe medical conditions that make the repair more urgent
- If your home has been damaged as a result of domestic abuse, we may also deal with these repairs more quickly than usual

9.6 Charging you for repairs

In certain circumstances, you are responsible for paying the cost of repairs. (Our repairs staff will tell you if this applies.) These include the following:

- If you, members of your family or your visitors have damaged or misused fixtures and fittings; this can include doors, door handles, walls, floor tiles, skirting boards, picture rails, ceilings and kitchen units
- If repairs are needed as a result of you redecorating or making changes that we have not agreed to
- Any repairs that are not caused by 'fair wear and tear' or by using the property and its fittings in the normal way
- Replacing toilet seats
- Removing fixtures that you have fitted
- Clearing rubbish or your belongings
- Replacing heating equipment or fireplaces that you have removed
- Replacing keys, or forcing our way in when you have lost your keys
- If the request for a repair is a hoax made by you, a member of your household or a friend
- An electrical fault caused by your own appliance.
- Damage caused by the police forcing their way into your home as a result of you refusing to let them in; if the police force their way in through no fault of yours, we will charge the police the cost of the repairs

Exceptions

We may not charge you for the repairs listed above under some exceptional circumstances, including:

- If the damage has been caused as a result of domestic abuse
- Criminal damage by someone else.
- If you have mental health problems, medical problems or learning disabilities and you live alone

9.7 Carrying out emergency repairs yourself

If, for any reason, we do not carry out an emergency repair, you may be entitled to carry out the repairs yourself and claim the cost back from us. This only applies if your health, safety or security is at risk and the repair is our responsibility.

9.8 Repairs to newly built and renovated homes

If you live in a newly built or renovated home (a home that has been improved), we will normally have a 'defect liability period' in which the original builder or organisation that renovated your home is responsible for carrying out repairs. This period normally lasts between six and 12 months. You should report the repair as normal to the Customer Services Team, who will record the repair and organise the repair with the builder.

Please report any faults to your local office. The time it takes to carry out the repair will be in line with our repair timescales. If the fault does not cause a risk to our residents or the property (such as minor decorating), we may not organise a repair until the end of the defect liability period. The Specialist Defects Team will explain this to you.

10. Resident engagement

10.1 About resident engagement

Residents' Matters is The Hyde Group's Resident Engagement Strategy. Our aim is to increase opportunities and remove barriers to resident engagement to improve services. Residents and staff are working together to ensure that we provide excellent services. A key part of this strategy is to ensure residents are heard. The strategy aims to:

1. Remove barriers and increase opportunities
2. Improve effective communication
3. Enable residents to influence services
4. Offer training and support to residents
5. Create a resident focused culture
6. Offer effective, efficient and value for money services

For a copy of Residents' Matters, please contact the Resident Engagement Team at your local office.

10.2 Ways to get involved

Getting involved with The Hyde Group ranges from helping to shape the services we provide for you and your neighbourhood, to simply attending the social events we organise. Whether you can spare a few minutes, hours or days in a month, there are plenty of ways to get involved and engage with us. By becoming a Hyde 5000 member you can make your views heard and make a lasting difference. There are different levels of commitment and influence as a Hyde 5000 member:

- **Level 1** (Minimal taster level of involvement, high level of influence) – No dedicated time commitment and no need to travel other than attending local events. Take part whenever it suits you.
- **Level 2** (Low level of involvement, high level of influence) – You will be required to attend regular meetings in your local area, with a small amount of participation and reading. There will be a possibility of attending meetings in other locations dependent on your availability. Training is not compulsory but available if desired.

- **Level 3** (Medium level of involvement, high level of influence) – You will be required to attend meetings which may be outside of your local area. Small amount of preparation prior to meetings is necessary with reading material provided. Commitment can vary from monthly to quarterly meetings dependent on the group. Attending the relevant training courses is recommended.
- **Level 4** (High level of involvement, high level of influence) – You will be committed to attend pre-scheduled quarterly meetings, as well as others in between, if you are available. You will be expected to attend relevant training courses and to read materials provided and prepare prior to meetings. You will be involved in scrutinising local services and performance.
- **Level 5** (Highest level of involvement, high level of influence) – You will be committed to attend scheduled quarterly meetings, as well as others in between, if you are available. You will be expected to attend relevant training courses, read materials provided and prepare prior to meetings. You will be involved in scrutinising services and performance at Group-level and will feed into the formal governance structure.

We are committed to making involvement as flexible as possible, at all levels. If you are unable to attend a meeting we have video and telephone conference facilities available.

10.3 Training and learning

If you want to learn new skills, increase your confidence and find out more about The Hyde Group, you may be interested in attending one of Hyde's training courses. The Hyde Group Resident Training Programme is available to all Hyde 5000 members. We provide training and support so that residents can learn new skills and get involved in influencing services within the organisation.

10.4 Expenses

We will reimburse all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses that you might incur as a result of getting involved. This includes travel costs and child care or carer costs. Contact your local Resident Engagement Team for full details.

10.5 Hyde 5000 groups and panels

Level 5	12	Hydewide Residents' Eye (HRE)	13	Hydewide Residents' Voice (HRV)
Level 4	11	Resident Assurance Committee (RAC) or Residents' Council		
Level 3	8	Contractor selection & monitoring	9	Resident Inspectors
			10	Scrutiny Panels, resident associations, or community groups
Level 2	4	Mystery Shopping	5	Focus groups
			6	Editorial panels
			7	Local estate inspections
Level 1	1	Attending local events	2	Online Residents' Forum
			3	Surveys

1. Attending local events – Come along to local community events in your neighbourhood to find out more about Hyde, chat to staff and to take part in face-to-face surveys.

2. Online Residents' Forum – Join in on debates and exchange your views informally with staff and other residents on the Residents' Forum.

3. Surveys – Tell us about your experiences and help to improve our services. Sign up to complete surveys by phone, post, online or face-to-face.

4. Mystery Shopping – Act as a customer to test the quality of customer service and then report the findings back to your local mystery shoppers group.

5. Focus groups – Join other residents in your community to give your views on new policies, procedures or strategies that affect you.

6. Editorial panels – Help staff to find and write stories for Hyde's quarterly magazine HydeLife.

7. Local estate inspections – Join staff and other residents on walkabout inspections of your area to identify local issues that are causing concern to you and your neighbours. This can be anything from overgrown gardens and graffiti, to dog fouling and dumped rubbish.

8. Contractor selection & monitoring – If you have lots to say about the services you receive, you might like to get involved in contractor selection or monitoring of their performance.

9. Resident Inspectors – Inspect different areas of The Hyde Group, checking how we are performing against our Service Promise.

10. Scrutiny Panels, resident associations or community groups – Get to know your neighbours and help to campaign for issues that affect your community, whether it is communal gardens in your area, anti-social behaviour or applying for community funding. Take part in monitoring Hyde's Service Promise on a Scrutiny Panel.

11. Resident Assurance Committee (RAC) or Residents' Council – Apply to become an RAC or Residents' Council member to help scrutinise, influence and shape our services in your local area.

12. Hydewide Residents' Eye (HRE) – Join this committee of residents who oversee Hyde's internal inspection programme. They decide on the order of inspections, review results and check action plans to ensure Hyde's services continue to improve.

13. Hydewide Residents' Voice (HRV) – If you are a RAC member you may have the opportunity to join the HRV. This principal committee of resident representatives monitor and scrutinise how Hyde is performing across the Group. The Chair of HRV sits on Hyde Group Board.

Join Hyde 5000 and get involved in any of the groups and panels. For more information, contact your local office or visit: www.hyde-housing.co.uk/get-involved.

11. Welfare benefits

If you are disabled, sick, unemployed or on a low income, you may be entitled to benefits to help with your housing costs. For more advice, please call your local Citizens Advice Bureau, Benefits Agency, or Hyde Plus.

11.1 Housing Benefit

This is a government benefit that helps you pay your rent and service charges if you are on a low income. The council pay the benefit to you, but can pay it direct to us if you want them to. Housing Benefit does not always cover all your rent and service charges.

Housing Benefit is generally paid four weeks after the rent due date. We strongly recommend that you get your Housing Benefit paid direct to us to avoid getting behind with your rent and service charges.

You may be entitled to Housing Benefit if you receive other benefits, such as Income Support

If you are on Income Support, Employment Support Allowance or Jobseekers Allowance

To claim Housing Benefit, you must tell the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that you are a tenant paying rent to a housing association. You will be asked to fill in a form to say how much rent you pay. You can also get this from your local authority.

If you are not on Income Support, Employment Support Allowance or Jobseekers Allowance

Contact your local authority in order to make a claim for Housing Benefit. You will need to give details of your income, the rent you pay and the size of your household. Send this to the council with proof of the information that you have given. This proof can include your original tenancy agreement (not a photocopy), bank statements and payslips.

11.2 Applying for Housing Benefit

If you plan to apply for Housing Benefit, please remember the following:

- You are responsible for applying for Housing Benefit and chasing up your claim with the council.
- Payments are not usually backdated (paid from an earlier date than your application) so you should apply as soon as you move into your home or your circumstances change.
- Claims often take weeks to assess.
- You can ask for payments to be made within 14 days if you have supplied all the relevant documents and your claim is agreed.

11.3 Renewing your Housing Benefit or change of circumstances

Once you have applied for and been awarded Housing Benefit, this will run continuously until there is a change in your circumstances, or the local authority request to review your current situation.

It is up to you to tell the Benefit Office about the following changes and any others that they could not reasonably know about:

- A dependant turning 18, or going into full-time work
- Moving to a different address
- A change in the income or benefit of anyone living in your household
- A person leaving or moving into your home (for example, a new partner)
- Your savings increasing or reducing
- Your claim for Income Support stopping (even for a short time)
- Your Income Support being replaced by another type of benefit

These are just examples, and there may be other changes that could affect your claim.

If you are paid too much Housing Benefit because your circumstances have changed, the extra amount will be taken from future payments. This could lead to you getting into debt or falling behind with your rent payments. We have a duty, by law, to tell the Housing Benefit Office if we believe that you are receiving the wrong amount of Housing Benefit.

11.4 Council Tax Benefit

This is a government benefit managed by the council to help towards the cost of your Council Tax. You may be eligible if you receive Income Support, Employment Support Allowance, Jobseekers Allowance, or are on a low income. You may receive up to 100% of your Council Tax, depending on your circumstances.

11.5 Other benefits you may be entitled to

- **Working Families Tax Credit** – You may be able to claim this if you work full-time or part-time, pay childcare fees and are on a low or mid-level income.
- **Statutory Sick Pay or Employment Support Allowance** – You may be entitled to these if you are ill or unable to work.
- **Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance** – These are for people who are disabled and need help with personal care or getting around.

For more information on these benefits, contact your local Department for Work and Pensions office, your local authority, your local Citizens Advice Bureau, Hyde Plus, or visit www.direct.gov.uk for advice on all benefits.

12. Home users guide – how to use your heating and save money on energy bills

Expert research has shown that it is possible for one household to have an annual energy bill that's nine times higher than that of different people living in exactly the same home; this difference is down to how they use their home. Spending a bit of time learning how to make effective use of your home can make a massive difference to your annual bills, easily saving hundreds of pounds.

These instructions are based on a normal gas – heated home – some homes have different heating and hot water systems. Further instructions are in your home.

12.1 Electricity and gas

- Adjust your boiler timer to only heat your home as you need it – not 24 hours a day.
- Hot water – either use a timer or remember to switch it on and off as required.
- Use a combination of both the room thermostat and the individual thermostatic radiator valves to control the temperatures in each room. A thermostatic radiator valve is the control on the inlet to each radiator, usually with a setting of 1-6; the valves intelligently turn the radiator on and off depending on room temperature.
- Government recommended temperatures are:
 1. **Living room** – 21°C maximum, 18°C recommended as a healthy temperature where children are present
 2. **Bedrooms** – 18°C maximum (falling lower at night)
 3. **Bathroom** – 24°C maximum
 4. **Kitchens** – 18°C maximum
- Fit energy-saving light bulbs. The technology has improved a lot recently, and the good modern ones light up instantly and produce a light equal to or better than old-fashioned tungsten bulbs. They use 80% less energy and last up to ten times longer, saving £7 per year per light.

- Switch most appliances off at the wall and do not leave them on standby – some old DVD players use 20 watts even on standby.
- Try using a real time display to find out which of your appliances waste electricity – particularly at night, when you are asleep. These are available to borrow from libraries, and experience shows that they can help you save 20% of your electricity bill.
- If buying new appliances, get A-rated, or better; an A++ fridge costs £25 a year, whereas a C-rated fridge costs £59.

12.2 Water

- A third of household water is used through flushing the toilet. You can get FREE devices from your water company that cut down on a litre of water per flush.
- Having a shower instead of a bath could save 300 litres of water a week.
- When you brush your teeth, don't leave the tap running – this will save six litres of water a minute.
- Wait until you have a full load before using the washing machine, and use energy saving settings at lower temperatures.
- Try keeping a bottle of cool water in the fridge, rather than running the tap for ages until it runs cold.
- Water butts can be fitted to your gutter system in the garden. The water butt will collect rainwater that can be used for watering your plants.

12.3 Waste and recycling

- Ask your local council for details of refuse and recycling collection days.
- Local councils all operate recycling schemes and will provide you with a container to keep it in. Things that can be recycled include glass, plastic, cans and paper. Each ton of recycled paper can save 17 trees.

For more advice on energy saving, why not browse the internet? You will find that your utility companies and even your local supermarket website have tips.

Part 2: For assured and secure tenants

13. Your tenancy agreement

Your tenancy agreement covers the legal terms and conditions of your tenancy in detail. This section of the handbook gives you more information.

13.1 Secure and assured tenancies

Secure tenancy

Tenancies starting before 15 January 1989 are known as secure tenancies. If you are one of our secure tenants and you transfer to another of our homes, you will still be a secure tenant. This also applies if you exchange homes with another secure tenant.

Secure tenants have certain rights under the Housing Act 1985. One of the most important rights is that you cannot be evicted from your home without a court order, and that, before this happens, we must have served you with an appropriate Notice of Intention to Seek Possession and give you the reasons for serving it. This right and the others are all set out in your tenancy agreement.

Assured tenancy

If your tenancy with us began on or after 15 January 1989, you have an assured tenancy. These tenancies were created by the Housing Act 1988 and are now the major form of tenancy we grant.

Assured tenants have similar rights to secure tenants (see above). However, there are some differences in the reasons we can use to take legal action to repossess your home. These are listed in your tenancy agreement. Again, you cannot be evicted from your home without a court order.

13.2 Joint tenancies

You can be a joint tenant for either a secure or an assured tenancy. A joint tenancy is where two adults sign the agreement and so become equally responsible for keeping to the terms of it. These terms include paying rent and service charges, and how you behave towards your neighbours.

We grant joint tenancies according to the information we receive from the local authority or referral agency that nominates you for a home.

If you are one of our current tenants and you want to apply for a joint tenancy with another person from your household, you should first contact your Housing Officer.

You must also prove that the person you want to add to the tenancy has lived with you for at least a year. We will then decide whether we can grant a joint tenancy. We will not grant a new joint tenancy if you owe any rent.

If your relationship breaks down and you can no longer live together, you may become involved in a dispute about which of you will stay in the home. If this happens, you should seek independent legal advice about your rights. The laws that apply to this matter are complicated, but if you get divorced or if there are children involved, sometimes the courts can decide who keeps the tenancy. In these cases, the tenancy is not always awarded to you as the tenant – it may be awarded to your husband, wife or partner.

If your relationship breaks down or you separate, we do not have a duty to rehouse you.

13.3 Succeeding to a tenancy

Partners may have the right to succeed to (take over) your tenancy when you die, as long as:

- You have not already taken over the tenancy yourself.
- They were living in the property as their permanent home at the time (relatives must have lived with you continuously for at least 12 months before you die).

If your partner does not have an automatic right to succeed to your tenancy as set out above, we will consider any special circumstances that might apply before we decide whether to accept or refuse an application to succeed.

If the property becomes under-occupied when someone succeeds to your tenancy (for example, a single person living in a three-bedroom flat or house), we may ask that person to move to smaller accommodation.

13.4 Am I allowed to sublet part of my home or have a lodger?

Yes, as long as you do not cause overcrowding, and you have our written permission. A lodger would not be able to have exclusive use of part of your home (in other words, you cannot sublet them a part of your home that only they have access to), but would live as part of your household and possibly share meals.

You would not be allowed to sublet if we planned to carry out improvement work that would affect the part your subtenant was living in. If your home is under-occupied (that is, it is too large for you), you may prefer to move to a smaller home.

13.5 Assigning your tenancy

In most circumstances, tenants do not have the right to assign or transfer their tenancy.

The only exceptions are assigning your tenancy through a mutual exchange (see section 15, *Options for moving home*, in this handbook) or under a court order if your relationship has broken down. In other specific cases, we may grant you permission to assign your tenancy. For more information, contact your Housing Officer or your local office.

13.6 What happens if you change your name?

You should contact your local office, who will send you a change of name form. You will need to provide a copy of any relevant documents (for example, a marriage certificate or deed poll certificate).

14. Living in your home

14.1 Aerials and satellite dishes

You must get permission from us and your local authority (if necessary) before you install an aerial or satellite dish. The aerial or satellite dish must be installed by a qualified contractor who is suitably covered by insurance.

14.2 Making changes and improvements

You can make some improvements or changes to your home, but you must contact your local office for written permission before going ahead with the work. This might include fitting your own kitchen or bathroom, converting your loft or taking down partition walls, etc. Please ask for the *Home Improvements and Compensation* leaflet (code: HG-LPRM Home Improvements & Compensation). Although we cannot unreasonably withhold this permission, we may grant it under certain conditions.

It is a Building Regulations (Part B – Fire Safety) requirement that front doors to flats in blocks are constructed to resist fire for a minimum of 30 minutes in order to protect communal escape routes. These doors will normally be fitted with self-closing devices that, in the event of fire, will contain it to the flat of origin. Hyde has a statutory duty to maintain any equipment or devices provided for the protection of communal areas. As such, the changing of doors or adaption of self-closing devices must only be undertaken with the express permission of your local office.

For more information about making improvements and changes, please contact your local office.

14.3 Condensation

Most of the complaints we receive about dampness turn out to be the result of condensation. This is caused when moisture carried by warm air reaches a cold surface and turns back into water. You can limit the amount of condensation in your home by doing the following:

- Trying to reduce the amount of water in the air by, for example:
 - keeping lids on saucepans when cooking;
 - opening windows
 - closing doors to prevent water vapour travelling to colder areas of your home
 - Reducing the amount of steam created by filling the bath with hot water, by first filling it with some cold water
 - Making sure that the vents to any tumble driers are directed outside your home
- Trying to keep your home warm enough to avoid having cold surfaces that water vapour can gather on.
- Not blocking up any airbricks or vents, leaving a space between furniture and walls to allow air to circulate, and generally making sure your home is well ventilated

14.4 Draining down radiators

Some residents drain down and remove radiators before decorating. Before you try to drain down your radiators, you should check on the type of central-heating system you have in your home.

If you are decorating, we recommend that you employ a qualified heating engineer or plumber to remove and refit your radiators.

14.5 Gardens and shared gardens

If houses are converted into two or more flats, residents are responsible for cleaning the hallways, staircases and landings, unless this is covered by a service charge and the work is carried out by one of our subcontractors. You should arrange and agree responsibilities with the other residents to look after the different parts. We will arrange to redecorate shared hallways and staircases, when necessary, to keep them in reasonable condition.

You are also responsible for looking after shared gardens if this work is not covered by a service charge. If you share a garden, please make suitable arrangements with your neighbours and make sure that the garden is kept in reasonable condition.

14.6 Holidays

Please pay your rent before you go on holiday. If you pay using a payment card, you can pay at post offices and Pay Point counters across the country. For other ways to pay, please see section 6, *Rent and service charges*, in this handbook.

Before you go on holiday, you should turn the water off at the mains and unplug electrical appliances that are not in use. In some cases, it may not be possible to turn off your water as the stopcock may be in another property. If the stopcock is in your home, please do not turn it off if it controls water to more than one flat.

You must let your local office know if you are going to be away from your home for eight weeks or more. It may also be a good idea to ask a neighbour to keep an eye on your home while you are away, or to tell the organiser of your local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme (if you have one in your area) that the property will be empty. Please make sure that you lock all windows and doors before you go.

14.7 Asking callers for identification

Always check the identity of anyone who calls at your home before you let them in. Our staff and contractors will show identification before they enter your home.

If you are not sure about a caller's identity, please check with your local office.

14.8 Keys

We generally provide a Yale-type lock to the door of your house or flat, and also to the main door of blocks of flats, or houses that have been converted into flats. We do not keep any spare keys.

If you want to fit a stronger lock at your own expense, you must apply for permission to do so. We will not unreasonably withhold our permission but, due to fire regulations, mortice locks without suitable quick-release mechanisms cannot be fitted to main front doors that give access to more than one flat.

14.9 Parking

Garages are available for rent in some areas, although there may be a long waiting list.

For more details, please contact your local office. There are some shared parking spaces, which any resident or visitor can use.

We can arrange specific parking spaces for disabled people, where possible. Please be considerate and leave these spaces for residents who have problems walking or getting around.

Please park carefully, so that you do not block other drivers, pedestrians or the emergency services, and so that you do not damage grassed areas, pathways, and so on.

We provide parking facilities for taxed, insured and roadworthy vehicles only.

14.10 Security grilles

We recognise that some tenants may want to increase or upgrade their home security arrangements. However, because of the impact on fire safety arrangements, any tenant wishing to install security grilles must obtain permission from their local office. Permission to install grilles will be dependent upon the following conditions

- The resident obtaining and paying for Building Control approval.
- That when open the grille does not impede communal fire escape routes.
- The grille being operable from the inside without the need for a key (i.e. by a thumb-turn latch).
- Resident conformation that the grille will be fixed to the door frame only. Residents will be charged for removals and repairs where fixings penetrate communal walls, floors and surface finishes.
- Where fitted over front doors leading off communal areas, the front door must be closed when not in use. Leaving front doors open behind closed grilles can seriously compromise the escape of building occupants in the event of fire.

We will take legal action against any tenant that is found to be in breach of this policy. Breaches will also be referred to Fire and Rescue Authorities who may take independent action against the tenant(s) in question.

14.11 Communal gardens and play areas

We want all our residents to have safe enjoyment of communal gardens and play areas. To help this, all residents are asked to consider whether or not communal area activities will create a nuisance or pose a risk to the safety of themselves or others. This consideration should extend to the use of play equipment and cooking equipment (barbeques etc.). Residents must ensure that hazardous equipment is properly supervised at all times, limited to personal and family use unless with the express permission of other parents/guardians and cleared away when finished with.

Residents are not permitted to carry out any commercial activities on Hyde's communal areas without the express permission of the local office. This requirement extends to (but is not limited to) paid for play equipment (bouncy castles, trampolines, etc.) and the sale of food and other goods.

14.12 Window safety

Some of the windows in our properties, particularly those in multi-level buildings such as blocks of flats, will be fitted with opening restrictors and or safety latches that are designed to prevent falls. If you notice that the window restrictors in your home or those in communal areas have failed or have been vandalised please notify your local office immediately so that repairs can be carried-out.

14.13 Dumped rubbish and fly-tipping

You must not leave any rubbish or unwanted bulky items in communal areas. Dumping rubbish is dangerous and illegal.

Do not leave large items of furniture or rubbish outside your home. Do not store items that you no longer want, or such things as bikes, prams or pushchairs in communal areas. If you do any of the above you are breaching Health and Safety Regulations, and we will insist that any items left in communal areas are removed. We have legal powers to remove these items and recharge you for any cost incurred in the removal.

We are determined to take necessary action against anyone who is found dumping rubbish on our land; it is a criminal act and those found responsible could face prosecution. The cost of removing dumped rubbish from our land will be passed on to all residents on the estate through service charges unless we can identify the person who is responsible and prosecute them.

Reporting dumped rubbish or fly-tipping

If you wish to report a case of dumped rubbish or fly-tipping, please contact your local office. We will treat your report as confidential. With your support we can reduce the dumping of rubbish or fly-tipping in your neighbourhood.

Removing bulky waste

If you need to dispose of large or bulky household waste please contact your local council's environment department to find out about their rubbish collection schemes. Many local council's run free bulky waste collection schemes.

14.14 Smoke alarms

All Hyde homes are fitted with smoke alarms. To keep your smoke alarm in good working order, you should test it once a week by pressing the test button until the alarm sounds. You should also change the battery once a year (unless it is a ten-year alarm).

15. Options for moving

15.1 Your options for moving home

If you feel your home is no longer suitable for your needs, there are various ways we can help you. If you want to move urgently, you could look at the possibility of choice-based lettings or joining a local authority waiting list. One of the best options could be mutual exchange.

You may need a new home because you have a disability or medical problem or you are a victim of serious antisocial behaviour. If this is the case, let us know straight away. If there is a very serious threat to your health or safety, we may be able to help you transfer to an empty property or – in an emergency – to temporary accommodation arranged with your local council.

15.2 Choice-based lettings and local authority waiting lists

If you live in an area where there is a choice-based letting (CBL) scheme the first step is to register with your local authority. The majority of Hyde tenants will now be considered for a move through CBL that include both local council and Hyde properties. Hyde is a partner in many CBL schemes, which aim to optimise choice and create balanced communities. We work in partnership with local authorities to ensure Hyde residents are given the best possible opportunity for a move to another home that suits their needs.

A CBL scheme allows tenants and new housing applicants to bid for properties they are interested in. All available properties are usually advertised on a website and in a weekly or fortnightly magazine. People looking to move are usually put into one of four 'priority bands' according to their housing need.

All available empty properties coming up are advertised on the website and in the magazine. The property advert will tell you about the property, including the size, type and location and usually with a photo of a similar property type. You can bid for the properties you are interested in and are eligible for. All the bids for a property are recorded in priority order by band and length of time on the housing register. Once the time for bidding is closed those on the top of the shortlist will be contacted and invited to view the property and are made an offer of the property.

A few areas are not yet covered by CBL schemes. Where this is the case you will need to register with the local council to join their housing waiting list. Your application will be assessed and points awarded according to your need.

15.3 Mutual exchange

When two or more tenants swap their homes, it is called a mutual exchange. This can be a good option for tenants wanting to move to a new place but not wanting to spend time on a waiting list. Any tenant who has a secure or assured tenancy can apply for a mutual exchange with either:

- Another Hyde Group tenant
- A tenant from another housing association
- A local authority tenant

There are different options available for you to find someone to swap with. There are two websites where you can register your home for an exchange; the national Home Swapper site and also House Exchange. Both websites are free to join for Hyde residents:

www.homeswapper.co.uk
www.houseexchange.org.uk

You could also try other internet services, adverts in local shops, newspapers or libraries or speak to family, friends and neighbours.

With mutual exchanges, you accept the other tenant's property as it is, which includes taking on responsibility for any damage caused to the property by any previous tenants.

Occasionally we will withhold permission if the property is not suitable or if you have a probationary or assured short-hold tenancy but we will always let you know if this is the case as soon as we can. We will reasonably consider your request for a mutual exchange as long as:

- You do not owe any rent and you have not caused any damage to the property.
- You have not significantly broken your tenancy conditions with ourselves or another landlord (for example, harassing your neighbours), and have kept your home and gardens in a reasonable condition.
- The exchange does not result in the property becoming overcrowded.
- The exchange does not result in the property being under occupied by more than one bedroom.
- The property does not have special facilities which you would not need (for example, sheltered accommodation or a bungalow adapted for disabled people).

In the case of sheltered residents wishing to mutually exchange, a needs assessment would need to be conducted between the two properties.

15.4 Seaside and Country Homes

This is a scheme for older tenants who wish to move out of the city to the seaside or the country. It is a government initiative run by Housing Moves. This scheme does not guarantee you a move and priority is given to tenants who are giving up larger sized properties.

You can obtain more information at **www.housingmoves.org** or call **0845 021 2020**.

15.5 Buying your own home

New Build HomeBuy

Each year Hyde builds new properties that are available to purchase through the New Build HomeBuy part-buy/part-rent scheme. New Build HomeBuy (also known as shared ownership) is a government-funded shared ownership scheme designed to help you get on the property ladder.

If you are working or have a cash lump sum you may be able to buy a share of a property – usually between 25% and 75%. We will help you work out what share you can afford to buy so that you will not be stretched financially. You usually pay a mortgage on the part you own and a subsidised rent on the part you do not own. As your income rises you can increase the share you own, until you eventually own 100% and no longer pay any rent to us.

Resales

We also sell around 100 resales each year. These are homes that were built and sold in the past that are now available for purchase on a part buy, part rent basis because the existing shared owners want to move on. For more information on New Build HomeBuy or Resales contact:

Hyde New Homes on **0845 606 1221**
Email **info@hydenewhomes.co.uk**
Visit **www.hydenewhomes.co.uk**

Right to Buy and Right to Acquire

Right to Buy is a scheme where secure council tenants can apply to buy the property they live in. Properties are valued at current market prices. Most properties are offered for sale at a lower price because the tenant qualifies for a discount, which is usually £16,000.

Most housing association tenants do not have the Right to Buy. Two exceptions are ex-local authority tenants that were part of a stock transfer to Hyde who have the Preserved Right to Buy and ex-Stonebridge HAT tenants.

Some housing association tenants may be eligible for the Right to Acquire if their home was built after 1 April 2007 using Social Housing Grant. You will need to ask us if your home meets the conditions for Right to Acquire. If it does, you will receive a discount of up to £16,000 on the cost of buying your home.

For more information on the Right to Buy and the Right to Acquire contact your local office.

Warning!

There are private companies and individuals who offer to help tenants to buy their homes. But you may not get good advice from them and could end up becoming homeless.

Companies and individuals offering help

Sometimes, you are asked to pay for things that you can get for free. For example:

- We will provide an application form and help you fill it in.
- We will explain how the sales process works and answer your questions.
- We will give you information about how to find a solicitor.
- Banks and building societies offer free mortgage advice.
- We are here to help you and our advice costs nothing.

Companies and individuals offering money

Sometimes companies or individuals offer tenants money if the tenant agrees to a deal where the company ends up owning the property. If you enter into this type of agreement:

- Before you buy your property, you will have to repay the discount as soon as you buy it.
- After you buy your property, you will have to repay discount as soon as you make the agreement.
- The money you make is unlikely to be enough to buy another home, and you will not get another property to rent from your local council.

Please think very carefully before using one of these companies or individuals. Ask yourself 'what is in it for them? They may be suggesting that you do something that benefits them, not you. Do not sign anything that you are not entirely clear about or happy with.

Some tenants have become homeless after agreeing to deals like this. It is very important that you get independent legal advice from your own solicitor or the Citizens Advice Bureau, before you enter into such an agreement.

16. Ending your tenancy

- If you have a weekly tenancy, you must give us four full weeks' notice (starting from a Monday in the future) in writing if you want to leave your home and end your tenancy. If you have a monthly tenancy, you must give us one calendar month's notice in writing. We will charge rent up to the date your local office tells us your tenancy will end.
- If you have a joint tenancy and only one of you is leaving, both of you must let us know so that we can arrange for the tenancy to be transferred to the person who is staying (this is called an assignment).

16.1 Leaving the property

Your flat or house must be empty and clean when you leave. You must remove all your personal belongings from the property. We will charge you the cost of removing your belongings if you leave anything behind.

Your local council may be able to get rid of large furniture or items that you do not want.

Help us to keep our properties safe when they are empty by:

- Leaving any net curtains hanging if you do not want them
- Locking all the doors and windows when you go

Please return your keys to us when you leave. If you don't, you will be responsible for paying rent until you do. Keys will be accepted conditionally on the property being empty.

16.2 Tips for moving house

- Change your address details with your bank, the Benefits Agency, your employer, and any other contacts.
- If you are receiving Council Tax Benefit or Housing Benefit, tell the council your new address and the date that you are moving in.
- Contact your gas, electricity and water suppliers to ask them to come and read the meters and register new accounts in your name. You may also find it useful to take your own readings. and check them when you get your first bill.
- Redirect your mail to your new address.

16.3 Inspecting properties before you leave

When you tell us that you are leaving the property, we will come and inspect it to let you know if any repairs are needed for which you might be charged. This will give you the opportunity to put things right before leaving the property.

Part 3: For starter tenants, temporary housing tenants and other assured shorthold tenants

17. Your tenancy agreement

If you are an assured shorthold resident, you will not have the same rights as an assured or secure resident. The main differences are explained below.

17.1 Starter tenancy

We give starter tenancies to most new tenants coming into a Hyde home for the first time. A starter tenancy would usually last for the first year of your tenancy. If you maintain your tenancy to our satisfaction, we will change it to an assured tenancy at the end of the first year.

Moving into a new home is sometimes a stressful time. You may be moving into a new area and not know your neighbours, or you may not be familiar with how we work. By giving you a starter tenancy, we want to focus our attention on how you and your household settle into your home. During the first year of your tenancy we will try to visit you at least twice, and we want to give you any support and advice that you need to help you live in your new home.

The starter tenancy period gives us the chance to see whether you can keep to your tenancy agreement, look after your home and not be a nuisance to your neighbours. After 12 months, we will usually change your tenancy to an assured tenancy, as long as we have not given you a legal notice telling you that we will end the tenancy or that we have started possession proceedings against you. In some cases, we may extend the starter tenancy to 18 months – for example, if we are working with you to solve problems as a result of you breaking the conditions of the tenancy, or if we are about to take legal action against you.

A starter tenancy is an assured shorthold tenancy.

17.2 Other assured shorthold tenancies

We also offer assured shorthold agreements to residents:

- Who are housed temporarily from the local council's homeless waiting list and placed into Hyde temporary accommodation
- Who are offered a tenancy by Hyde New Homes, The Hyde Group's marketing team.

17.3 Security of tenure

If you are an assured shorthold resident, you will not have the same rights as an assured or secure tenant. You do not have security of tenure. This means that we can end your tenancy at any time.

We can do this by giving you a Section 21 Notice Requiring Possession (NRP), which gives you two months to remove all your belongings from the property and move out. If you do not do this, we will apply to the court for permission to take possession of the property. The judge does not have a choice and must give us this permission. If this happens, we will also apply to have you pay our court costs (this could be over £250).

We will only do this if you:

- Break a condition of your tenancy, for example, if you:
 - owe us rent
 - behave in an anti-social way
 - do not change your behaviour in a way we are satisfied with
- Live in a property that we lease from a private landlord (known as a 'temporary housing' property – see below). At the end of the lease, we must 'hand back' the property to the landlord. The local authority will have a duty to rehouse you if this is the case. (This only applies if the local authority put your name forward from the homeless persons' register.)

If you are evicted because you have broken a condition of your tenancy, you will be seen as having made yourself intentionally homeless, and the local authority may not have a duty to rehouse you. Hyde will not consider you for rehousing in the future.

17.4 Transfers and mutual exchanges

As a starter or an assured shorthold resident, you do not have the right to a mutual exchange or to request a transfer to another property, either within our housing or to housing provided by another landlord. If you have been put forward for temporary housing by the local authority, they may offer you other accommodation after your qualifying period has run out. You should speak to your local authority to confirm this.

17.5 Temporary Housing

We lease properties from private landlords to rent out to people who need temporary accommodation. We usually do this with the local authority who put forward names to us from the homeless persons' register.

The landlord leases the property to Hyde and we manage the property for a period of three to seven years. Hyde are responsible for completing most of the internal repairs. All repairs are to be reported to Hyde, and we will arrange for them to be completed either by our contractors or by the private owner.

Property inspections

Your Housing Officer will complete an inspection of your property every six months. It is very important that you give us access, and we use this visit to look around and help you with any queries that you may have. Whilst this property is temporary, it is your home for the time that you are living there, and so it is important that you look after it. Any tenant damage or neglect will be recharged.

Repairs for temporary housing homes

There are some repairs that continue to be the owner's responsibility. Each lease that we have with an owner may have its own conditions. However, as the resident, you must report all repairs to Hyde.

If the landlord is responsible for repairs, we must give them enough notice for the repair to be carried out. This can cause delays, but we aim to keep this to a minimum. If there is a delay, we will let you know and keep you up to date with our progress.

White goods and gifted items

If you live in a property that falls in the London Borough of Southwark, you will be provided with a fridge/freezer and cooker/oven. These remain the responsibility of Hyde to maintain/repair. These are not yours to keep and must be left in the property when you vacate it, or you will be charged for their replacement.

Some properties offered by the temporary housing team may have some white goods. They are likely to be gifted to you. If they are gifted, then they are your responsibility to maintain and not Hyde's. If they break down, then it is your responsibility to get them fixed or buy replacements.

17.6 Special terms and conditions for assured shorthold tenancies

- **Pets**

If you live in temporary accommodation, you are not allowed to have any pets.

- **Satellite dishes**

You are not allowed to erect satellite dishes to your home.

- **Decoration**

You are able to decorate your home, but this must be decorated in neutral colours such as whites and beiges.

- **Furnished and partly-furnished properties**

Some properties (such as some rented properties let by Hyde New Homes) may have white goods (for example, washing machines and dishwashers) or carpets provided as part of the tenancy. The Housing Officer letting the property to you will clearly explain this. If this is the case, you will be responsible for any intentional damage caused by you, a member of your household or your visitors to any item we have provided for you to use. We may use your service charge to pay the costs of repairing and replacing these items in the future. Any intentional damage caused by you or your visitors will be recharged back to you.

17.7 Ending your tenancy

If you have a weekly tenancy, you must give us four full weeks' notice (starting from a Monday in the future) in writing if you want to leave your home and end your tenancy. If you have a monthly tenancy, you must give us one calendar month's notice in writing. We will charge you rent up to the date your local office decides your tenancy will end.

If you have a joint tenancy and only one of you is leaving, both of you must let us know so that we can arrange for the tenancy to be transferred to the person who is staying. This is called an assignment.

You must also advise your Housing Officer that you are leaving and give four weeks' notice.

17.8 Leaving the property

Your flat or house must be empty and clean when you leave. You must remove all your personal belongings from the property. We will charge you the cost of removing your belongings if you leave anything behind.

Your local council may be able to get rid of large furniture or items that you do not want.

If you have a key or card meter at the property, you must leave the key and card in the property.

It is very important that you complete a tenancy – termination form with a forwarding address, and return all sets of keys to your local office.

Help us to keep our properties safe when they are empty by:

- Leaving any net curtains hanging if you do not want them
- Locking all the doors and windows when you go.

Please give us back your keys when you leave. If you don't, you will be responsible for paying rent until you do. Keys will be accepted conditionally on the property being empty.

Leave any cards or keys in the property for the gas electric meters.

17.9 Tips for moving house

- Change your address details with your bank, the Benefits Agency, your employer and any other contacts.
- If you are receiving Council Tax Benefit or Housing Benefit, tell the council your new address and the date that you are moving in.
- Contact your gas, electricity and water suppliers to ask them to come and read the meters and set up accounts in your name. You may also find it useful to take your own readings and check them when you get your first bill.
- Redirect your mail to your new address.

17.10 Inspecting properties before you leave

When you tell us that you are leaving the property, we will come and inspect it and let you know if any repairs need to be made (you may be charged for any repairs that need making). This will give you the chance to put things right before leaving the property.

17.11 Other rights and responsibilities

We will treat you equally and fairly, no matter what type of tenancy you have. Our service standards, complaints and equality and diversity policies apply to all residents.

Glossary of terms

A

Aids and adaptations – Alterations done to existing properties to make them more suitable for use by elderly or disabled people.

Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 – The Antisocial Behaviour Act introduced new measures to deal with antisocial behaviour, including closure orders and demotion orders.

Assignment and assign – The process of legally transferring a tenancy from you to another person.

Assured shorthold tenancy – A form of assured tenancy that can be ended by the landlord, giving the tenant two months' notice.

Assured tenancy – A form of tenancy introduced in the Housing Act 1988 that can only be ended by the landlord with a court order for possession.

C

Choice based lettings – A system that some local councils and housing associations use to let their properties, where applicants for social housing and existing tenants who want to move apply for available properties, rather than being allocated them. The common feature is that once someone has registered that they are looking for housing, they have to bid for properties that become available, rather than waiting to be offered one. Based on their circumstances, they will be awarded a 'priority rating', and this will determine who gets a property if several people bid for it.

Civil Partnership Act 2004 – The Civil Partnership Act allows same-sex partners to register their partnership. This Act gives civil partners similar rights to those of married couples.

Confidentiality – We will keep the information we have about you secure. We will only give it to relevant organisations if they ask us in writing. We will not give information to individuals.

Communal areas – The part of the building that everyone can use. This includes entrances, hallways, staircases, landings, courtyards, play areas and community halls.

Court order – A legal document issued by the court that sets out the conditions that the tenant or landlord must follow.

D

Data Protection Act 1998 – Under this legislation, we must let you see the personal information that we have about you on our computer or in our manual records.

Decanting – Process of moving residents from their homes while improvements are carried out.

Defects Liability Period – A guarantee period for which a contractor is still responsible for the work to your house, rather than the landlord.

E

Eviction – The removal of occupants from their home as part of the legal process to recover possession of the property. It can only be legally done after a court order has been granted.

F

Fixtures and fittings – All appliances and furnishings (not removable furniture) in the property, including those for supplying or using gas and water.

G

Garden – Lawns, paved yards, spaces enclosed within your boundaries, hedges, flowerbeds, trees, shrubs, outside walls and fences attached to your home.

Grounds for possession – The reasons the landlord uses when asking a judge if they may take back the home of a secure or assured tenant.

H

Harassment – This includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- Any behaviour or actions that threaten the physical or mental health, safety, security or sense of wellbeing of any other person.
- Any behaviour or actions that have a hurtful or destructive effect on any person's ability to peacefully enjoy their home or the area they live in.
- Damage or threats of damage to property belonging to another person, including damage to any part of a person's home.

- Writing threatening, abusive, offensive, or insulting graffiti.
- Any action or neglect aimed at interfering with the peace or comfort of any other person or inconveniencing them.

Home, the property – The property you live in, including the garden (if you have sole use of it), but not including any shared areas.

Housing Act 1985 – The Housing Act that brought together all housing legislation since 1957, into one Act.

Housing Act 1988 – The Housing Act that introduced assured tenancies.

Housing Act 1996 – The housing legislation that introduced new grounds for possession related to anti-social behaviour and domestic violence.

Housing Benefit – Financial help from the local authority to help tenants on low incomes to pay their rent.

I

Improvement – Any alteration or addition to your home.

Incapacity Benefit – Payment for people who are unable to work because of illness or disability. Replaced on 27 October 2008 by the Employment and Support Allowance, but can still be claimed if the illness or disability started before this date.

Independent Housing Ombudsman – Investigates complaints against registered providers from tenants and leaseholders. If the Ombudsman finds that there is a problem, they can ask the landlord to pay compensation or review their procedures so that the problem does not happen again.

Injunction – A legal document issued by the court that asks an individual or organisation to do, or not to do a specific action. A landlord can use an injunction to deal with anti-social behaviour by a tenant.

L

Local area – The whole of the estate the property is on, and, in most cases, any other place within one mile of the boundary, including privately owned or other rented properties. In some circumstances, the definition of local area may go beyond one mile of your home.

Lodger – A person who you allow to share your home with you, whether for a charge or not.

Low cost homeownership – Range of schemes intended to help those who cannot afford to buy a home get onto the housing ladder, normally by buying a part share in a property through initiatives such as Homebuy.

M

Money judgement – An order set by the court that enforces payment of a debt, for example, rent arrears.

Mutual exchange – The exchange of homes from one tenant to another, which must first be approved by the landlord.

N

Notice to quit – A formal notice from either us or you to end the tenancy.

Notice of seeking possession – A formal notice from us saying we will ask the court to grant possession.

P

Partner – This includes your husband, wife, civil partner, or someone who lives with you as your husband or wife. A civil partner is someone who has entered into a formal arrangement (known as a civil partnership) with a same-sex partner that gives them the same legal status as a married couple.

Possession order – A legal document issued by a court, under which a landlord gains the right to ask the tenant to leave the property.

Preserved right to buy – This is the right to buy that only certain tenants will have, for example, if you were living on a local authority estate when it transferred to us. It allows you to buy your home at a discounted rate.

Principal home – Your main home where you live for most of the time.

R

Rechargeable repair – Damage that is caused to the property by you or your visitors. We will charge you the cost of the repair.

Registered providers of social housing – Housing organisations that are registered with the Tenant Services Authority.

Relative – Includes parents, children, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, step-relatives, adopted children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces.

Rent arrears – Outstanding rent payments that you owe us.

Rent Assessment Committee – An organisation that sits to determine the reasonableness of assured rents in the event of a dispute.

Rent guarantee – A formal guarantee given by a landlord that sets out its plans for future increases in rent.

Rent Officer – An independent official who is responsible for setting a fair rent if we or you ask them to.

Retail Price Index (RPI) – The UK Retail Price Index (All Items) or, if this stops being published, another published index of general prices or the value of money that we tell you we are going to use instead.

Right to acquire – The right of tenants of registered social landlords to buy the property in which they live.

Right to repair – The right to compensation if certain repairs are not completed within the set time limit on two occasions by two separate contractors.

S

Security of tenure – Landlords cannot ask a tenant to leave their home without a court possession order.

Secure tenancy – A form of tenancy defined under the Housing Act 1985. The landlord can only end the tenancy with a court order.

Service charge – An amount we charge on top of the rent to cover shared services provided to homes, such as maintaining grounds, clearing estates, lifts and door-entry systems.

Shared areas – Parts of the building that all tenants can use including the hallways, stairs, shared gardens and other areas.

Sheltered housing – Housing specially designed for elderly people grouped together, with a range of communal facilities.

Sublet – Giving another person the right to live in part of your home and charging them rent to live there.

Succession/Succeed/Successor – The transfer of a tenancy when the tenant dies.

Supported housing – Shared or self-contained housing in which older people or residents with special needs are provided with a wider range of services that are designed to meet their needs.

Suspended possession order – An order given by the court that means that as long as the tenant follows the conditions of the court order, no further action will be taken.

T

Tenancy – The legal right to live in the property.

Tenancy agreement – A legal contract between the tenant and the landlord that sets out the rights and responsibilities of both sides.

Tenant Services Authority (formally The Housing Corporation) – The government agency that funds and regulates registered social landlords like Hyde.

W

We, us, the landlord – The Hyde Group, comprised of five registered providers (RPs) of social housing, one of which will be your landlord.

V

Vehicle – For example, a car, van, bike, boat, or trailer.

Y

You – The tenant, and in the case of joint tenants, any one or all of the joint tenants.

How to contact us

Hyde South East

(Lewisham & Southwark)

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(Greenwich & Bromley)

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Hyde South East email:

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Hyde Minster

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Hyde Hillside

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Hyde Southbank Homes

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Roundshaw Homes

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Fax: 020 8961 0291
Email: myhome@hyde-housing.co.uk

Hyde Plus

Freephone: 0800 030 4424
Email: hydeplus@hyde-housing.co.uk

Ways to get involved

To find out more about opportunities for getting involved, or for courses available to you on the Resident Training Programme, contact:

Central Resident Engagement Team

The Hyde Group, 30 Park Street, London SE1 9EQ
Tel: 020 3207 2600
Email: residentengagement@hyde-housing.co.uk

Find us online

Visit our website: www.hyde-housing.co.uk
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ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਜੇ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੈਟਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

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twitter.com/hydehousing

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The Hyde Group
Making a lasting difference