



## RESIDENTS' HANDBOOK

### Housing For Older People

If you have difficulty reading English, please let us know and we will arrange to have your Tenancy Agreement, the Handbook and relevant Policies translated into your language. These documents/leaflets can also be made available in larger print if required.

# SUTTON HOUSING SOCIETY

## INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to Sutton Housing Society's (SHS) housing for older people. In this pack, we will try to give you (and your family/carer) helpful information about the Society's housing for older people schemes and your home. When you signed your Tenancy Agreement, you will have received a leaflet giving you specific information about the scheme you live in. This pack gives you more general information about the Society, its policies and the service standards you can expect.

If you wish to talk about any of the contents in more detail, require copies of full Policies mentioned in the pack, or have any problems affecting your home, please contact your Community Housing Services Officer or the office and we shall be pleased to help you.

If you are unable to come to the office, we will arrange to visit you at home.

## OUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

Sutton Housing Society aims to provide good quality affordable rented housing and services for people in housing need living in, or connected with, the London Borough of Sutton. We aim to deliver a flexible, cost effective and customer focused service that meets the changing needs of people and promotes independence, choice and quality of life.

We seek to achieve our aims by:

- Promoting the independence of service users and preventing the need for more intensive services
- Creating a safe and secure home environment for service users
- Reacting appropriately in the event of an emergency
- Empowering and involving service users and promoting choice
- Assisting service users to access and maintain support from external agencies when required
- Enabling service users to establish supportive social networks
- Promoting health and wellbeing
- Avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions
- Helping service users to remain in their own homes for as long as possible
- Engaging with the surrounding community
- Assisting service users to pursue educational activities, employment or training opportunities

## GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

### The Office:

The Society's office is at Pat Shaw House, 13-19 Ventnor Road, Sutton, Surrey SM2 6AQ and is open Monday to Friday from 09.30am until 12.30pm and from

1.30pm until 4.00pm. Please leave a message on the answer machine outside these hours. (Telephone No: **020 8642 1500**. Email: [info@shsoc.org.uk](mailto:info@shsoc.org.uk)).

### **The Housing Operations Committee:**

The Society is controlled by the Housing Operations Committee whose members have a wide range of skills and considerable expertise in developing and managing housing schemes, in particular those for older people.

Members, who include residents, receive no payment for their services, are elected at Annual General Meetings or co-opted to vacancies on the Committee during the year. The Committee lays down policies and procedures for running the Society and oversees the work of the staff. Elected representatives of residents' organisations are actively encouraged to become Housing Operations Committee members.

### **The Homes and Communities Agency:**

The Homes and Communities Agency acts as a regulator for housing associations like the Society by publishing the Regulatory Code which we must comply with. It ensures we operate efficiently and within the Law.

The Society receives a public subsidy in the form of a Housing Association Grant to enable us to develop schemes with affordable rents.

## **SERVICE STATEMENT**

Sutton Housing Society is committed to providing the best possible service to our residents. Below we set out the standard of service you can expect to receive as a resident of the Society.

### **When you telephone the Society we will:**

- Answer the call promptly
- If the person you want to speak to is unavailable, we will offer an alternative wherever possible, or take a message for that person to return your call as soon as they are available to do so
- Provide a telephone number for use in an emergency out of office hours
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### **When you write to the Society we will:**

- Provide a full reply within five working days. If this is not possible we will acknowledge your letter and confirm when you can expect to receive a full response
- Try to ensure all correspondence is in plain English
- Arrange for translations to be made available, on request, if English is not your first language
- Arrange on request for leaflets or letters to be produced in a larger type or Braille if you are visually impaired

#### **When you visit the office we will:**

- Ensure our offices are accessible to residents and have convenient opening times
- Make arrangements for private or confidential interview by appointment
- Try to respond to your enquiry immediately and if we cannot we will tell you when you can expect to receive a response
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#### **When you report a repair we will:**

- Ensure you can report emergency repairs 24 hours a day
- Aim to complete repairs within the following times:
  - Emergency - 24 hours
  - Urgent - 5 days
  - Day to Day - 28 days
- Seek your comments once the repair has been completed
- Require all contractors to comply with the Society's Code of Conduct for Contractors
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#### **When something goes wrong we will:**

- Send you a copy of the Society's Complaints Policy on request
- Aim to resolve complaints effectively and speedily within the time targets set out in the Policy
- Seek your comments once the complaint is closed
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#### **We will assist and support you to maintain your tenancy:**

- By providing you a home for life if that is what you choose, except when your needs can no longer be met at home
- By agreeing with you a Support Plan to identify the things you need assistance with
- By reviewing your Support Plan every six months or more frequently if your needs change
- By assisting you to live safely in your home by providing on-going flexible support that promotes and enhances independence, choice and quality of life
- By providing you with 24 hour emergency assistance
- By helping you gain access to other services where we cannot assist you directly
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#### **We will create opportunities for you to be involved:**

- By consulting and communicating with you about decisions that affect your life
- By supporting Resident Associations
- By providing a variety of ways for you to choose to be involved including individual, group meetings and the opportunity for tenants to become members of the Housing Operations Committee
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#### **We will treat you fairly and equally:**

- By ensuring no tenant, applicant, member of staff or other person or group are treated less favourably on the ground of race, gender, ethnic origin, age, disability (including learning difficulties and mental health) or sexual orientation
- By valuing diversity and striving to ensure our workforce and customers reflect the wider population in the area in which we work

- By not tolerating discrimination and harassment especially where it is directed against people because of their race, gender or because they are disabled
- By respecting your cultural and religious beliefs
- By providing documents in other languages and formats (such as larger print or tape) where this would assist you
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#### **Any information we hold about you will be:**

- Held securely and in accordance with the Data Protection Act and our Confidentiality Policy
- Accessible to you in accordance with the Data Protection Act
- We will also make available other information, such as our policies and our performance in accordance with the principles of the Freedom of Information Act

### **OUR SUPPORT SERVICE:**

- Helping in setting up and maintaining the home and tenancy
- Liaising and working with others on behalf of the service user
- Help in managing finances and benefit claims
- Help with gaining access to other services
- Monitoring health and wellbeing
- Provision of Emergency Alarm
- Help in establishing social contacts and activities
- Help in establishing personal safety and security

### **HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE SERVICE – OUR VALUES:**

Sutton Housing Society aims to provide support services in its housing for older people schemes in a manner consistent with the following principles:

#### **Privacy:**

The right of an individual to be left alone or undisturbed and free from intrusion or public attention into their affairs in accordance with the Human Rights Act.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The assurance that personal information is kept private and in accordance with the Data Protection Acts and the Freedom of Information Act.

#### **Dignity:**

Recognition of the intrinsic value of people, regardless of circumstance, by respecting their uniqueness and their personal needs and treating them with respect.

#### **Choice:**

We aim to promote residents' choice in all matters and will consult with you before we make any changes.

#### **Rights:**

The maintenance of all entitlements associated with citizenship provided they do not impinge on the rights of others.

#### **Fulfilment:**

The realisation of personal aspirations and abilities in aspects of daily life.

# YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## TENANCY AGREEMENT:

Your tenancy will be an assured weekly tenancy, the terms of which are set out in your Tenancy Agreement. Also set out in the Agreement are the Society's obligations and your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, including:

- Who can succeed to your tenancy if you die?
- When you can assign the tenancy to someone else
- Lodgers and sub-letting
- Mutual Exchanges
- Transfers

## ENDING A TENANCY:

You may terminate your tenancy at any time by giving the Society four FULL weeks' Notice in writing. This Notice must expire on a Sunday. This gives us time to find a new tenant for the property. You are expected to leave the property clean, empty and in a reasonable state of repair. Any broken fixtures or fittings must be repaired or replaced before you leave.

If the property is not left clean, the Society will have it cleaned but will charge the cost to you or your estate. Any items left in the premises after the notice has expired will be removed by the Society and the cost charged as above.

- Any Notice given can be withdrawn
- Less than 28 days Notice can be accepted on occasions
- All keys must be returned to the Office on vacation, and at the latest by midday on the Monday following expiry of the Notice period

## ENDING A TENANCY ON DEATH:

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing, these will cease on the Sunday following the date of death and your estate or your next of kin will be liable for all charges.

To mitigate this, the Society recommends that you maintain your rent account monthly and in advance, which is in line with the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement..

The reason why we request a Notice Period is to allow relatives time to clear your possessions and complete all the necessary organisation of your affairs. This notice must expire on a Sunday.

Your next of kin or executors are expected to leave the property clean, empty (including removal of carpets) and in a reasonable state of repair. Any broken fixtures or fittings must be repaired or replaced.

If the property is not left clean, the Society will have it cleaned but will charge the cost to your estate. Any items left in the premises after the notice has expired will be removed by the Society and the cost charged as above.

- Less than 28 days Notice can be accepted in extenuating circumstances.
- All keys must be returned to the Office on vacation, and at the latest by midday on the Monday following expiry of the Notice period.

## **PROCEDURES ON ENTERING A RESIDENTIAL HOME:**

If you need to enter a residential or nursing home for any reason, then both you and the home have a period of up to six weeks to decide if this is the right move in your particular circumstances.

During this period, you will still hold your tenancy with the Society and you may also pay any charges which the home will levy. For those in receipt of benefits, the charges for the home may be met by Social Services.

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing element, these will still be paid to the Society. Payments for service charges will need to remain in place during this period until a final decision on whether you will return to your old home is made.

It is possible to give Notice of Termination at any time during the six week period, or at the end of the six week period. However, the Society will require formal Notice of Termination in writing and confirmation that your new home is permanent.

Notice can be withdrawn at any time and no home will be re-let without a conclusive decision that a resident will not return.

It is therefore possible to match the four weeks statutory Notice required by the Society in to the six week period for decision. If Notice is not given until the six week period is up, then a four week statutory Notice period will still need to be given and Benefits may not be paid. Liability for charges will remain with the ex-tenant.

In most cases, both the residential or nursing home and the resident are happy with the placement and it is possible to achieve the Notice Period and the settling in period during the same time.

## **INFORMATION:**

You have the right to ask for and receive annually, information about the Society's performance including:

- a) Rents charged for different sizes of accommodation
- b) How quickly repairs were carried out
- c) Success in collecting the rent due from tenants
- d) Empty properties
- e) Speed at which homes have been let or re-let to what categories of people.

and request information on or receive on a regular basis the following:

- Housing Management Policies
- Newsletters
- Resident Satisfaction
- Resident Involvement

- Resident Consultation
- Any other information available under the General Data Protection Regulations and Freedom of Information Act

The Society publishes this information each year in the Annual Report, a copy of which is sent to all residents yearly, and in Board Papers and the papers of the Housing Operations Committee, which can be viewed on request.

## **THE HOMES AND COMMUNITIES AGENCY:**

The Homes and Communities Agency acts as a regulator for housing associations like the Society by publishing the Regulatory Code which we must comply with. It ensures we operate efficiently and within the Law.

# **RENT AND OTHER CHARGES**

## **WHAT IS RENT?**

Rent is the amount you pay to live in your home. It is a charge which must be paid on time and in advance. When you signed your Tenancy Agreement you made a legally binding agreement to pay your rent.

## **THE AMOUNT OF RENT YOU PAY?**

There are three main elements to your rent charge:

- Net Rent
- Housing Benefit eligible service charges
- Service Charges not eligible for Housing Benefit (water rates and heating charges to your home) if applicable

The net rent we charge you is based on the Society's Rent Plan. This plan is based on values of the buildings and their locations set within a series of target rents established by the Government for social housing rents. These target rents are increased annually by the published inflation figure for the previous year.

## **WHEN IS THE ANNUAL RENT INCREASE?**

Rent will be increased annually and one month's notice will be given of any increase to be made. Rent increases for assured tenancies are in April.

Tenants have the right to refer any increases the Society proposes to the Rent Assessment Committee, which will fix a market rent for the accommodation. Information about how you make a referral will be sent to you prior to any increase being made.



## WHAT IS THE SERVICE CHARGE?

The cost of all the communal facilities, the cleaning of the communal areas, garden maintenance and staff management are all included in your rent as a “service charge”. If you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing element to help pay your rent, the service charge counts as part of your rent and is covered by the benefit.

The only exception to this is where we provide the heating and hot water and/or Wifi in your home as part of the service charge. Housing Benefit / Universal Credit does not cover that part of the service charge.

Please note that you are also responsible for paying any water charges, plus any gas or electricity you use in your own home.

## WHEN TO PAY YOUR RENT:

Your rent is payable weekly in advance and is due on the Monday of each week. You may choose to pay weekly, fortnightly or monthly, but all payments must be paid in advance for the period that you choose.

## HOW TO PAY YOUR RENT:

You are responsible for paying your rent and service charges. Your Tenancy Agreement or annual rent notification tells you how much rent you pay.

You can pay your rent by:

- Direct Debit through your Bank or Building Society. For more information, call **020 8642 1500**.
- Cash or debit card at any Post Office using your “Allpay” payment card.
- Cash at shops where you see the PayPoint outlet signs, using your “Allpay” payment card.
- Debit card by calling ALLPAY call centre on **0844 557 8321** using your “Allpay” payment card.
- Debit card via the internet at [www.allpayments.net](http://www.allpayments.net) using your “Allpay” payment card.

If you choose to pay your rent monthly, we calculate your payment by dividing the total annual rent by 12 to calculate a monthly payment amount.

**Please Note:** As there are more than four weeks in some months, the monthly amount will be more than four times your weekly rent.

## WHAT IS DIRECT DEBIT?

A Direct Debit is an instruction from a customer to their Bank or Building Society authorising an organisation to collect varying amounts from their account, as long as the customer has been given advance notice of the collection amounts and dates.

## WHY USE DIRECT DEBIT?

### Gives you peace of mind

Payments are made automatically ensuring your rent payments are never forgotten.

### Saves you time

Direct Debit takes the hassle out of your rent payment. You don't have to queue at your Bank to change a standing order instruction or fill out a cheque each time.

### Guaranteed

You are protected by three important safeguards:

- an immediate money back guarantee from your Bank in the event of an error
- advance notice if the date or amount changes
- the right to cancel at any time

### WHAT IS ALLPAY?

It is a personally embossed payment card, issued when you become a tenant. When you make payment at an outlet using your Allpay card, you will be issued with a receipt. It is advisable to keep your receipts until the amount appears on your rent statement.

### What if I lose my Allpay card?

The card has no monetary value to anyone if lost; but you must report the loss to us as soon as possible by telephoning **020 8642 1500**. In most cases a replacement card will be with you within three working days.

Look for the payment logos below:



The card is swiped, the payment processed and a receipt issued as proof of payment. The Post Office® accepts cash, debit card or cheque, PayPoint accepts cash only.

Alternatively, you can pay with a debit card by one of the following methods:



By Phone  
**0844 5578321**



Via the Internet  
[www.allpayments.net](http://www.allpayments.net)



Download the Mobile App  
[www.allpayments.net](http://www.allpayments.net)

### HOW OFTEN WILL I RECEIVE A RENT STATEMENT?

Rent Statements are sent twice a year. You may also request a statement by calling **020 8642 1500** or emailing [info@shsoc.org.uk](mailto:info@shsoc.org.uk).

## HELP WITH PAYING RENT:

### Housing Benefit:

If you are on Income Support, or have a low income, you may be able to get Housing Benefit. A leaflet explaining the scheme and an application form can be obtained from the Housing Benefit Department, London Borough of Sutton, Civic Offices, St Nicholas Way, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1EA.

If you have any other enquiries about Housing Benefit, you can telephone a customer service line on **020 8770 5444**. They will give you advice and help with any problems you may have with Housing Benefit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your claim with Housing Benefit is renewed at the appropriate time and to provide the relevant documentation to assist your claim

### Universal Credit - housing element:

If you are of working age and unemployed or on a low income, you may be eligible to claim the housing element of Universal Credit. If you would like more information on this benefit, you can contact the Department of Works and Pensions – DWP – on **0800 169 0190**.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your claim with the DWP is renewed at the appropriate time and to provide the relevant documentation to assist your claim

## FALLING BEHIND WITH YOUR RENT?

What can you do?

If you find that you cannot afford to pay your rent, you need to contact the office immediately on **020 8642 1500** or email us to discuss your situation. We will provide assistance and advice on help that may be available to you.

We will agree a way you can clear the debt by paying a realistic amount within a reasonable time. However, if you fail to pay as agreed, we will be forced to take legal action to prevent the loss of rental income - and this could result in losing your home.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## SCHEME INFORMATION:

### What communal facilities are there at housing for older people schemes?

Most, but not all of our schemes, have one or more of the following. Your Scheme Leaflet will tell you specifically what is at your scheme.

### **A Common Room or Lounge:**

Usually with a small kitchen attached, this is the centre of social life at your scheme. Talk to your Community Housing Services Officer or Community Engagement Officer and find out what takes place there. You can use the common room for a private party if you book it with the Community Housing Services Officer. Sometimes we use the common room for staff meetings or training and we sometimes allow other people to use it too – but resident functions always take priority.

We actively encourage residents to get involved in organising activities and events at the scheme by joining a Social Committee. If there isn't one at your scheme, please speak to your Community Engagement Officer about how the Society can help you to start one.

No smoking is allowed in any of the communal lounges or public areas, such as the lounge and its attached kitchen, the hallways or lift. Smoking is allowed in residents' flats and outside the scheme away from communal doors.

### **Guest Room (available at Thomas House, Trickett House and Dorothy Pettingell House):**

Where your visitors can stay overnight. This may be useful if you have family or friends who live outside the area. There is a small charge. To reserve a guest room, please contact our Community Housing Services Assistant. Bookings are normally on a first-come-first-served basis. If your flat is large enough, it may be possible for your visitor to stay in your flat for a brief period if, for example, you were ill. Normally however, overnight visitors should use the guest room. Be assured we are more than happy for people to visit you at any time. Please note that you or your relative should provide their own bed linen if using the guest room.

### **A Laundry Room:**

Washing machines and driers may be provided for your use. Your Community Housing Services Officer will show you how to use them. Please note that these facilities are for your own personal washing and are not for the use of non-residents.

### **Garden:**

The garden and grounds are looked after by our contractors. If you would like to help maintain the gardens and grounds, this is normally possible and welcomed. Just ask your Community Housing Services Officer.

### **Bin Store:**

Bin stores are provided for domestic refuse only. Please do not put bulky items such as old furniture in the bin rooms or the paladin bins as the refuse collectors will not take them away. The Council provide a bulk refuse clearance service (there may be a small charge). Please ensure that you use the recycling bins appropriately.

### **Can I have a pet?**

You may keep a small caged bird, or fish in an aquarium, but you must have written permission for these. Cats and dogs are not normally allowed. If you have a pet of any kind, you must arrange for it to be looked after if you fall ill. Please let your Community Housing Services Officer know what these arrangements are.

### **Gifts to Staff:**

Sometimes residents want to give a gift to a member of staff on special occasions but please note that staff cannot normally accept gifts, and never money, from residents. We have strict rules on what staff may accept and this usually means inexpensive items, such as a bunch of flowers or a box of chocolates, which should then be passed to Head Office. Your Community Housing Services Officer can explain the limitations to you or a copy of our Policy is available on request.

### **What if I want to make changes to my home?**

We want you to be as comfortable as possible in your home and we encourage you to make your home your own, within reason. If you are considering making any changes to fixtures and fittings please ask your Community Housing Services Officer first as written permission will be needed for this.

### **Decorations:**

You are responsible for the decorations (such as painting) inside your flat. The Society decorates the communal and exterior areas on a regular basis.

### **Aids and Adaptations:**

If you need any alterations or special equipment in your home to make it easier to manage, ask your Community Housing Services Officer. An Occupational Therapist would need to advise you what you need. We can sometimes obtain grants for grab rails, a shower, or a special bath.

### **Electric Wheelchairs:**

If you are interested in purchasing a battery powered wheelchair or other special vehicle, it is advisable to speak with the Community Housing Services Officer who will let you know about available parking and battery charging facilities. We suggest you get a (professional) assessment so that the most suitable type can be recommended. You will also need to hold valid Liability Insurance Cover and some vehicles will need to be Taxed. Not all schemes have this provision available so please check before you commit to purchasing one.

### **Do I have to have a TV Licence?**

If you are over 75 you are entitled to a free TV Licence. Your Community Housing Services Officer will advise you of what to do.

### **Insurance:**

The Society insures the building and the communal parts but our insurance policy does not cover your personal possessions. It is important that you take out insurance to cover those items.

## **YOUR RECORDS:**

When you sign your Tenancy Agreement, you will be asked to complete a Resident Record Form. This provides us with the details of who to contact in an emergency as well as any special needs or health problems that the Mole Valley Control Centre may need to know about. It is essential that this information is accurate and up to date. You should advise your Community Housing Services Officer of any changes immediately as this could be vital in an emergency.

Other than the appropriate Society staff (and in the case of the Resident Record Form, Mole Valley Control Centre staff) no-one else will have access to your personal information. We place great emphasis on the confidentiality of information about residents. Information is provided to others on a “need to know” basis only and with your permission, unless it is an emergency and it would put you in danger if we did not share relevant information.

Personal information will only be recorded on your file if it is relevant to your Tenancy. All files at the scheme and Head Office are kept in locked cabinets. Personal information is never left lying around or unattended.

### **Access to your file:**

The General Data Protection Regulations and Freedom of Information Acts give you a statutory right to see and check information, both about yourself, and more general details which are held by the Society (other than information provided in confidence by a third party). If you would like to see or copy any information about yourself, please contact the Community Housing Services Manager who will advise you of the necessary arrangements.

The Society has 28 days to deal with your request. This gives us time to contact any other people who may have given us information about you (this is known as getting 3<sup>rd</sup> party consent). We have to ask their permission to release the information/documents. If they don't give permission, these items must be removed and then we can make the rest of the file available to you.

## **OPPORTUNITIES TO MOVE:**

### **Transfer:**

If you wish to transfer to another dwelling managed by the Society you should complete a transfer application form which can be obtained from the office. The Community Housing Services Assistant will give you details of the other accommodation we can provide and a copy of our Transfer Policy is available on request.

Transfer applications will normally only be accepted for tenants who have a clear rent account and have occupied their home for at least one year. Exceptions to the one year rule are where a tenant has suffered harassment or requires a move on medical grounds. If in doubt, discuss the matter with the Community Housing Services Assistant. Transfer applications are considered in relation to applicants' housing needs.

### **Mutual Exchanges:**

You can exchange/swap your accommodation with another tenant of a social landlord (such as a Council or another housing association) provided the incoming tenant meets the scheme criteria and all parties to the exchange have their landlord's permission which can only be withheld for certain reasons.

More details can be obtained from the office.

### **Right to Buy:**

Our Assured tenants do not have the Right to Buy at present.

# POLICIES

Below is a brief outline of some of our most referred to Policies. If you would like a copy of the full Policy which explains each Policy and Procedure in detail, please ask your Community Housing Services Officer.

## COMPLAINTS:

If for any reason you feel unhappy with the service we provide, or if we have made a mistake, you can complain to the Society. You can complain by speaking to a staff member by telephone, writing in or coming into Head Office. We encourage tenants to complain because it lets us know when things are not working or where we have to improve.

Your Community Housing Services Officer is your first point of contact but you can also contact Head Office. There is a copy of our Complaints Policy and Procedure available at the Scheme (often displayed on the Notice Board) and there is also a leaflet summarising the policy which can be obtained from Head Office.

## SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Report the problem to the Society
2. Complaint responded to by relevant Officer
3. Complain to the Chief Executive if the response is not satisfactory to the customer
4. Appeal to the Board Panel if you are not satisfied with the Chief Executive's response

If you are still not satisfied and have exhausted Sutton Housing Society Complaints Policy and Procedure, you can appeal to the Independent Housing Ombudsman at Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London E14 9GE **Phone:** 0300 111 3000

## DATA PROTECTION/CONFIDENTIALITY:

The Society holds information about you on file and on the computer and ensures that this information is held securely, confidentially and in a way that complies with legislation.

Access to information held on computer or in files about service users is only given to staff and other agencies where appropriate, where there is an essential need to know, when it is authorised by the service user and when it is related to the purpose for which the information was given.



The Society ensures that the opportunity is given for interviews about personal, confidential or contentious issues to be held in private.

Information is only held for as long as it is needed.

Staff receive training on confidentiality and access to information arrangements.

### **RENT ARREARS/SUNDRY:**

The Society aims to provide support and assistance to tenants in meeting their rental obligations and prevent debt occurring.

The aim of this policy is to sustain tenancies and to prevent or recover rent arrears and sundry debt such as recharges.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY:**

The Society is committed to providing equal opportunity in all areas of its work including allocation of housing, provision of services, maintenance and employment of staff.

All contractors on our approved list have to conform to our Contractors' Code which includes the requirement to treat all the Society's tenants equally.

All Board, Committee Members and staff also have to uphold our Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.

In the provision of, and maintenance of, housing services and employment of staff, the Society will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all persons. No person will be treated less favourably than any other person because of their religion, disability, marital status, age, cultural background, sexuality, sex, race or ethnic or national origin. Ethnic monitoring is carried out.

To fulfill our commitment to fair housing and equal opportunities, we will collect and monitor records of the ethnic origin, gender, age and disability of those applying for housing or employment with the Society.

We undertake to monitor the quality of accommodation offered to ensure we are not discriminating against any particular individual or group.

We value diversity and are committed to ensuring that the make up of tenants, staff and Committee Members reflect the diversity of the local community.

The Society will adopt a firm but fair approach to debt recovery

We aim to ensure residents' social, emotional, religious, cultural and personal needs are accepted and respected, where it does not affect the rights of others.

### **HARASSMENT, ABUSE AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:**

#### **HARASSMENT:**

The Society is committed to acting promptly on any harassment involving your home and particularly that which is racially or sexually motivated or because someone has a disability.



We ask you to:

- Let us know immediately if you or a member of your family is subject to harassment which is racially motivated
- Let us know immediately if you become aware another Sutton Housing Society tenant or a member of their family is suffering harassment which is racially motivated.

The Society will offer advice and support to help victims and will take action against perpetrators.

#### **RACIAL HARASSMENT:**

This is the Society's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. In summary, the Society aims to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

Racial Harassment is defined as:

“A deliberate act which interferes with the peace and comfort of an individual's quality of life and when the act has been committed against the individual because of his or her colour, race or ethnic origin.” (From the Commission for Racial Equality)

The Society will not tolerate racial harassment of any tenants, any member of the tenants' household or any person occupying the property with the tenants' permission and that every tenant should have equal access to the Society's services.

The Society will offer advice and support to help victims of racial harassment and will take action against known perpetrators.

The Society will arrange translation of its Equal Opportunities and Diversity and Racial Harassment Policies and Procedures into other languages for tenants who cannot read or write English.

#### **SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN:**

If you suspect that another resident of the scheme is being abused in some way by their relatives, a friend or a carer, please speak to your Community Housing Services Officer. The same applies if you feel you are being mistreated in any way.

Please contact your Community Housing Services Officer or any Officer of the Society. Alternatively, you can contact the London Borough of Sutton's Safeguarding Team on 020 8770 4565 or 020 8770 6080 or the local Citizens Advice Bureau (Sutton branch) on 020 8405 3552 or Social Services on 020 8770 6080.

We have a joint working policy and procedure for the protection of vulnerable adults with the London Borough of Sutton and will take any report seriously. Allegations of abuse are investigated by the Borough, not by the Society.

The Society promotes a culture which values good practice and encourages staff to draw attention to bad practice by having a policy on whistle blowing in the workplace that meets with the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

The Society has a Code of Conduct of how it expects staff to behave.

### **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:**

Sutton Housing Society believes that anti-social behaviour is a serious matter and will respond promptly and fairly to resolve any incidents that occur.

Everyone has the right to the quiet enjoyment of their home and this should not be spoiled by the unreasonable behaviour of others.

At the same time, we recognise that people's lifestyles differ and everyone has the right to live in a manner which they choose provided it does not spoil the quality of life for others.

We will provide additional support for people who are vulnerable or live in supported housing.

We will work closely with other organisations including the Police, the Council and other community safety partners to combat and reduce anti-social behaviour and will participate in relevant protocols to reduce crime.

If you are troubled by anti-social behaviour, please let your Scheme Manager know.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:**

The Society will take action against tenants who carry out violence or intimidation against other members of the household and will support the person suffering the violence in any way we can.

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

The Society has a responsibility, so far as it lies within its power to do so, to protect the health and safety of its employees, people working on contracts for the Society, residents of its properties and visitors to its premises. The Society takes this responsibility seriously and gives it high priority. It is Society policy to take all reasonable steps to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees, residents of its properties, contractors, suppliers, agents, visitors to its premises and for all other persons who may in any way be affected by the activities of the Society, its staff and contractors.

We employ qualified contractors to test things like the communal boiler system to make sure they are safe. The Property Services Officer carries out weekly checks on the emergency lights and fire detection system.

Your scheme is regularly checked to ensure it remains a safe environment. In addition, each year a formal inspection is undertaken.

You can help us to look after your health and safety by doing the following:

- **Personal Data:** Give your Community Housing Services Officer all the information they might need in an emergency, such as how to get hold of your next of kin and your doctor. Let him/her know of any changes immediately.
- **Health Problems:** Tell your Community Housing Services Officer about any special health problems you have, such as diabetes or an allergy to certain

antibiotics or medication. Some schemes have a “Message in a Bottle” system kept in the fridge. Ask your Community Housing Services Officer for more details.

- **Absences:** Tell your Community Housing Services Officer when you are going away for a while, especially if you will be away overnight, so they don't think you have disappeared unexpectedly. You don't want them to spend time looking for you if there is a fire alarm or the building has to be evacuated.
- **Report:** any faults, defects or health and safety concerns you have to your Community Housing Services Officer.
- **Security:** Do not let anyone into your home or the common areas, unless you know who they are and why they are calling. Ask to see their identity cards if they say they are coming for a specific purpose. Keep doors locked and ask your visitors to do the same. In the absence of the Community Housing Services Officer, please keep an eye on the common areas, especially things like windows on the ground floor left open at night.
- **Fire Safety:** When you move into your home you will be given details of fire safety in your scheme and fire notices are put up around the scheme and behind your flat door. In the event of a fire, you should raise the alarm and ring the fire brigade.
- **Insurance:** The Society insures the fabric and structure of the building, together with any furniture, fixtures and fittings forming part of the communal areas. **It is your responsibility to insure the contents of your home.**

## RECHARGES:

The Society will repair non wear and tear damage to communal areas and also non wear and tear damage to your home **but we have the right to charge you for the cost.**

We will recharge tenants for costs for which they are responsible; tenants are responsible for the conduct of all persons in the household, including any visitors to the property/communal areas.

All recharges will be recovered using a consistent approach.

All costs will be recovered effectively and efficiently.

We may recharge the following:

- Costs of repairs that are due to damage, abuse and/or neglect – except when the damage has been reported to the police and an incident number is provided.
- Costs of removing rubbish, including abandoned cars.
- Costs of storing, removing and disposing of household contents including furniture.
- Costs incurred to gain entry and/or to change locks.

The above list is not exhaustive.

The Society is also responsible for maintenance of any equipment supplied and fitted by ourselves (eg: extractor fans). You are responsible for the maintenance of any

equipment you own. We will repair your equipment **but we have the right to charge you for the cost.**

The Society cannot accept responsibility for damage to your carpets, furniture or other possessions caused by failure of any of its services. **We strongly advise you to insure your belongings.**

There is an appeals procedure regarding recharges and all appeals will be investigated by the Community Housing Services Manager. If the appeal is upheld, the resident will be informed in writing.

## **TENANT CONSULTATION, PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT:**

We advise every tenant of the Society's aims and objectives and are committed to encouraging feedback on how we operate; your views and opinions are valued. However, we recognise that residents like to get involved in different ways and therefore we have a variety of ways that tenants can get their views heard.

As a tenant of the society, you have the right to be consulted about any changes that the Society is considering to the arrangements for providing its housing management and maintenance service.

The Society actively supports and encourages tenants wishing to form Tenants Associations because they are an effective way of communication between the Society and the tenants and provides groups and individuals the opportunity to be involved with the management of their homes.

Meetings are held on schemes so that tenants as a group can discuss the service we provide or can make their views known when we are proposing to make changes or improvements. This includes changes to communal areas such as repainting and redecorating.

Every three years we carry out a detailed survey of all tenants that asks your opinion about a broad range of issues. In addition, we ask tenants to complete satisfaction slips for the repairs service and if they have made a complaint.

To help us improve how we do things, the Society encourages tenants to become members of working parties that are involved in what is known as Best Value reviews of our services.

Tenants can become involved in helping to run the Society by becoming members of the Housing Operations Committee.

# EMERGENCIES

## HOW DO I GET HELP IF I HAVE AN EMERGENCY?

We have an emergency help system that gives you peace of mind, knowing that you can easily summon help if you need it.

**IF YOU HAVE AN EMERGENCY BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 9.30AM AND 4.00PM PLEASE TELEPHONE OUR OFFICE ON:**

**020 8642 1500**

**AT ALL OTHER TIMES, PLEASE TELEPHONE OUR OUT OF HOURS SERVICE AT MOLE VALLEY EMERGENCY CONTROL CENTRE ON:**

**0300 123 7718**

### A Spare Key:

- is just that. It is a good idea for a friend or relative who lives nearby to hold a spare key. You should let your Community Housing Services Officer know who they are. Remember, if you lock yourself out by accident and have to be let in outside of office hours by Sutton Housing Society staff, you will be charged for the call out.

### The Master Key:

All of our properties are fitted with a Master Key system and a Master Key is kept at our Head Office for use in emergencies. Circumstances when the Master Key is likely to be used are:

- No response to a call where this is unusual and neighbours have not seen you recently and there is concern that you may be at risk of harm
- Where there is signs of a gas leak or a water leak which is causing damage to a property
- When you have given permission for an emergency repair
- Where there is concerns that someone may have broken into the property and could be unsecure
- If you are locked out and need access – there will be a charge for giving access during outside of office hours

## TO CALL THE EMERGENCY CALL CENTRE

### where the facility is available

- 1) Either press the **RED BUTTON** or Pull the **RED TRIANGLE** on the pull cord or Press your Petite Button / Falls Sensor.

- 2) The module will bleep and the **RED LIGHT** will flash.
- 3) A loud tone will sound and the Call Centre operator will speak to you.
- 4) Please answer the operator clearly and explain your situation.

### DOOR ENTRY SYSTEM

- 1) The Bleeper will sound from the speech module in your flat hallway.
- 2) Press the “Talk Button” to speak – “Hello – who is it?”
- 3) Release the “Talk Button” to listen to the person answer.
- 4) To let the caller in, press the “Key Button” to open the door.
- 5) If in any doubt **Do Not Open the Door**. If possible, go to the door to see who is there.

### IN AN EMERGENCY

- 1) Either Press the **RED BUTTON** or Pull the **RED TRIANGLE** on the pull cord or Press your Petite Button / Falls Sensor - this will notify that there is an emergency and the call will be answered by the Call Centre.
- 2) When you have pressed the button or pulled the cord for assistance **DO NOT** press or pull any other cords or buttons – your call will be answered and this could confuse the system and delay a response.
- 3) Please do not worry if you or a visitor accidentally pulls a cord or presses a button. When the call is answered, explain that it was an accident and confirm that you are OK. Although the equipment is regularly tested, these occasional accidents will confirm that all equipment is working correctly.

## REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

### REPAIRS:

The Society is responsible for the repairs to your home. We have an obligation to keep in good repair the structure, exterior and interior of your home. If in doubt, please contact the Asset Manager on 020 8642 1500. It is your responsibility to decorate the interior of your home and keep it in good condition.

### COMMUNAL AREAS:

The Society is responsible for repairs to any communal areas inside or outside of the building.

The outside will normally be redecorated at least every five years. The internal communal areas will be redecorated on a regular programme to keep them in good condition.

The Society is also responsible for replacing carpets and soft furnishings in communal areas. Replacement periods will depend on the wear and tear.

#### **DAMAGE: (Please also see our section on Policies - under “RECHARGES”)**

The Society will repair non wear and tear damage to communal areas and also non wear and tear damage to your home **but we have the right to charge you for the cost.**

#### **EQUIPMENT: (Please also see our section on Policies - under “RECHARGES”)**

The Society is responsible for the maintenance of any equipment supplied and fitted by ourselves (eg: extractor fans). You are responsible for the maintenance of any equipment you own. We will repair your equipment **but we have the right to charge you for the cost.**

#### **REPORTING REPAIRS:**

To report a repair, please telephone the office on 020 8642 1500 and select Option 1, explain the problem and we will arrange for someone to visit and either inspect or carry out the work. Alternatively, you can inform your Community Housing Services Officer or the Property Services Officer.

*AT THIS TIME, ARRANGEMENTS MUST BE MADE TO LET US OR THE WORKMEN INTO THE PROPERTY.*

If the problem is not an emergency, you can write to or email us giving details. If you are unable to contact us during working hours, you can leave a message on our answering machine.

You will be sent a copy of the repair order. If you feel you have waited too long for a repair, telephone the Asset Manager.

#### **EMERGENCIES:**

If an emergency occurs outside office hours and you cannot wait for the office to open, contact the Mole Valley Emergency Centre on 0300 123 7718.

Remember, messages left on our answering machine will not be dealt with until the office is open again.

#### **PLUMBING:**

If you have a leak, turn your water off at the stopcock and report the repair. If your drain or toilet blocks, report the repair. Wait until the blockage has been cleared before using the equipment again.

#### **ELECTRICITY:**

If your lighting or power fails, check to see if it is a power cut (with neighbours or in communal areas). If a fuse has blown – caused by faulty electrical goods – reset the trip switch on your fuse box. If the power or light does not return, report the repair. You should only contact the contractor out of office hours if all your lights or power fails.



### AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS:

If you are or become physically disabled, you may need aids or adaptations to suit your needs and enable you to continue living in your own home. The kind of work carried out ranges from a bath grab rail to the installation of a shower. Please contact the Society for further advice if required.

### RESPONSE TIMES:

It is important that you report repairs to the office as soon as you notice the problem. This is particularly important for water leaks. We try to complete your repairs as quickly as we can. Our target is:

EMERGENCIES	-	1 DAY
URGENT	-	5 DAYS
ROUTINE	-	28 DAYS

Some repairs can take longer, for instance major repairs where special funding has to be applied for or where the contractor has difficulty obtaining a part or gaining access to your home.

### EMERGENCY REPAIRS – TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 24 HOURS:

- Serious blockages and leaks to wash hand basins, bath or sink wastes or supply pipes (by serious we mean leaks where the water is likely to cause damage to the property or present a danger to tenants)
- Blocked WC pans or toilets not flushing where only one in dwelling
- Replacing door or window locks where security is at risk
- Re-glazing where security is at risk
- Replacing roof tiles or slates where water is entering the dwelling and is likely to cause either damage to the property or a danger to tenants
- Clearing blocked foul water drains
- Gas escapes or total loss of supply
- Serious water leaks (by serious we mean leaks where the water is likely to cause damage to the property or present a danger to tenants)
- Space heating and hot water failures in dwellings occupied by elderly or seriously ill persons or families with children under the age of five years during the period October to March inclusive
- Space heating failure when there is no other form of heating during the period October to March inclusive
- Reports of electric shock or exposed wires within dwelling
- Overheating of electrical accessories (switches, sockets etc) or smell of burning from the electrical installation within dwelling
- No lights/power including external communal staircases
- Emergency lighting not working
- Total loss of water supply
- Blocked flue to open fire or boiler
- Loose or detached banister or handrail
- Checking electrical supply following water ingress

### URGENT REPAIRS – TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN 5 WORKING DAYS:

- Blocked WC pans where more than one in dwelling
- Re-glazing where security not at risk



- Space heating or hot water failures in dwellings occupied by elderly or seriously ill persons during the period April to September inclusive
- Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working
- Door entry-phone not working
- Supply to cooker or freezer not working
- Cooker supplied by the Society not working
- Hot water system failure
- Partial loss of lighting or power
- Non-serious water leaks and blockages
- Flushing mechanism to toilet cistern when only one pan in dwelling

### COMPENSATION FOR NOT DOING REPAIRS ON TIME:

We hope it never happens but where you have had to report an urgent or emergency repair to us more than once and we have still not done the repair after the second target time has expired, you will qualify for compensation of £10.00 and then a further £2.00 for each additional day the repair has still not been done, up to a maximum of £50.00.

### TENANTS IMPROVEMENTS:

In some circumstances tenants can claim compensation for certain improvements they do where they have followed the correct procedures and have the written consent of the Society. Compensation is only payable at the end of the tenancy and the amount, which reduces each year, depends on how long ago the improvement was carried out.

The improvements that can qualify for compensation are detailed below:

### QUALIFYING IMPROVEMENTS:

#### Installation of the following:

#### No of years after installation that some compensation can be paid:

Bath or shower	12
Wash hand basin	12
Additional WC	12
Additional storage cupboards in bathroom or kitchen	10
Thermostatic radiator valves	7
Additional insulation to pipes or cylinder	10
Loft or cavity wall insulation	20
Draught proofing of external doors or windows	8
Double glazing or other external window replacement or secondary glazing	20
Any object which improves the security of the dwelling (excluding burglar alarms)	10
Rewiring or the provision of power and lighting and other electrical fittings (including smoke detectors)	15
Installation of kitchen sink	10
Installation of space/water heating	10

## **HEALTH & SAFETY IN YOUR HOME & SURROUNDING AREA**

This is some important information relating to health and safety in your home; please do take the time to read this. If you have any questions, please speak to your Community Housing Services Officer.

### **Water Safety:**

Legionella is a form of bacteria that can grow in water systems. It is usually contracted by inhaling minute water droplets. Some people are more vulnerable than others such as older people or people with existing lung conditions.

In a domestic setting the biggest risk of contracting legionella would be whilst showering. Chlorinated water, regular use of these water supplies in your home and some simple precautions can reduce the small risk to virtually eradicating it.

If you have not used any tap or water outlet in your home for around a week, please run the outlet for a minute to clear any water that will have sat in supply pipes. For your shower, always run the supply for about a minute. In addition keep the shower head clear by cleaning it regularly.

### **Fire Safety:**

Fire risk assessments are carried out to communal areas in buildings. The last was completed early in 2017. A weekly fire alarm test is carried out at all housing schemes which have a fire alarm. Other elements such as emergency lighting are regularly checked.

### **Asbestos:**

Asbestos surveys were carried out to our buildings in late 2017. We have an Asbestos Management Plan in place to manage any asbestos present in both communal areas and within individual homes.

There is asbestos present within individual homes at Dorothy Pettingell House, Griffiths Close, Old Brewery House, Thomas House and Trickett House. (If you live within any of these schemes you will be advised of the location of any asbestos).

Asbestos that is in good order does not present a risk; however, should you wish to carry out any improvement works to your home, please ensure you ask for consent first. SHS would then advise you of any known asbestos and precautions that should be taken.

If damage is caused to any identified areas of asbestos within your home, you must notify us immediately.

### **Gas Safety:**

SHS carries out an annual gas safety inspection to any home which has its own gas boiler. We also carry out inspections to our communal boilers. This is a legal requirement.

If we, or our contractor, contact you regarding access to carry out a gas inspection, it is part of your tenancy conditions to allow access for this inspection to be undertaken.

We also carry out gas safety inspections to any property when it becomes vacant.

Under no circumstances should you carry out any works to gas appliances without the express consent of SHS. If permission is granted you will be required to use a Gas Safe registered contractor and to supply certifications for the work.

### **Electrical Safety:**

SHS carries out periodic electrical inspections to your home. We will carry out a formal inspection and test as part of a 5-year plan to our communal areas within buildings. We will also carry out a formal inspection and test to your home as part of a longer 10 year plan.

We also carry out electrical checks to all homes when the property becomes vacant. (This may be a visual inspection if the formal inspection and test was carried out very recently).

Under no circumstances should you carry out any works to electrical installations without the express consent of SHS. If permission is granted you will be required to use a registered contractor and to supply certifications for the work.

# **SUTTON HOUSING SOCIETY PRIVACY STATEMENT**

## **Introduction**

Sutton Housing Society Limited (SHS) is committed to protecting your privacy and takes this responsibility seriously. This Privacy Statement is designed to advise how SHS uses your personal information, how it is processed and how it is used.

## **Data Controller**

As a small organisation, SHS has a senior member of the staff team that is designated as its "Data Controller". This is the Head of Finance and Resources. They can be contacted via e-mail at [info@shs.org.uk](mailto:info@shs.org.uk) or by contacting the office on 020 8642 1500.

The role of the Data Controller is to ensure that SHS properly processes, stores, maintain and erases the data we gather. The Data Controller is responsible for ensuring that we comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulations.

## **The SHS Website**

SHS makes every effort to ensure that the website is up to date and that information is relevant and accurate.

We make every effort to ensure that links from this website to third party websites are relevant, current and appropriate but SHS does not accept liability in connection with any third party websites which may be linked or accessible through our website and we do not endorse or approve the contents of any such site.

Any data submitted via our website online forms and via emails is not secure and we cannot guarantee that information submitted will not be intercepted or modified, or that it will be received safely. When a form or email is received by SHS via the SHS website, you will receive an automated acknowledgement of this.

We make every effort to ensure that our systems and website are free from viruses and harmful files. However, the material accessed through the use of our web pages is obtained entirely at your own risk and you will be responsible for any resulting problems or damage to software or computer systems and/or any resulting loss of data.

SHS is not liable for any direct, indirect, special, incidental, or consequential damages arising out of the use of the information held on the site.

Nothing on this website shall be construed as an offer or the basis for a contract between us and you or any other party.

Information on this website is provided for information purposes only; you should not rely on it to make any decision without either taking professional advice or verifying the accuracy of the information provided.

The materials on our website are owned by us and we reserve copyright and all other rights in them. Our name and any image or logo we use to identify ourselves are our trademarks and may not be reproduced without our permission in writing.

You may download, print and store information from this website while acknowledging our copyright in it.

We may request your e-mail address or mailing address for the purposes of conducting a survey or by your request to have someone contact you for additional information. If we request the identity of a website visitor, we will clearly indicate the purpose of the inquiry before the information is requested. We do not intend to sell, rent, or otherwise give your e-mail address to a third-party, without your consent.

Our website and these terms and conditions shall be governed by English law and subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts.

SHS is a charitable organisation registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 number 16614R. Our registered office is Pat Shaw House, 13 – 19 Ventnor Road, Sutton, Surrey SM2 6AQ

## **Privacy Notice**

SHS respects the privacy of its tenants and housing applicants. Your contact with us generates records which can include records of some personal information which is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998.

This privacy notice explains our approach to data protection.

### **How we collect personal information**

We collect information in a variety of ways mainly via various forms but also on the website and through our contracts.

Our day to day work entails regular, ongoing contact and correspondence with you, with statutory and non-statutory organisations that provide sustainment services, support/care related to you/your family and from people associated with you such as family, friends and neighbours.

We do not record telephone calls to and from the Head Office; our partner that responds to alarm calls and to any out of hours contact, does record calls for the purpose of ensuring your safety and security and for their staff training purposes. SHS will only ever ask to hear any recordings if you make a complaint about the way your call was dealt with, if staff are not clear about what was said, we cannot gain clarity elsewhere and for staff training purposes.

If you provide us with personal information relating to members of your family or your associates we will assume that you do so with their knowledge and consent.

It is important that you notify us of any changes to your personal information as soon as possible so that we can contact you easily and ensure our records are accurate. From time to time, SHS may contact you to review the information held to ensure it's appropriate and accurate.

### **The information that we hold**

When you apply to SHS to become one of our tenants, we ask you to complete a form so that we can ascertain your housing needs; this information is obligatory and we have a legitimate purpose for requesting the information. In order to help us assess your application, we may take up references from other housing providers/private landlords, your mortgage lender (if you own/have owned your own home), the Police, the Probation Service, support workers, social workers, mental health workers and credit reference agencies.

As a SHS tenant we will also need your bank details together with any benefit and council tax information. This information is obligatory and we have a legitimate purpose for requesting the information in order to collect the full rent due.

Once you become an SHS tenant, your Housing Application form is stored within your house file in hard copy format. This is also included in any scanned tenancy file and stored electronically.

We will record information whenever you contact us or use our services and we will note any action taken, for example logging repairs and feedback from our contractors about their appointments, so that we have a record of what happened.

We may take photographs at events organised and hosted by SHS. When becoming a tenant of SHS, you will have been given a form to sign indicating whether or not you were happy to be included in photographs which we use for the on SHS' website, in brochures and other publicity material (such as newsletters) and may be provided to the media for publication in local newspapers. At any events, you will always be given the option not to be included in a photograph. Where group shots are to be taken you will be advised that photographs are being taken and any individual photographs will only be taken with your consent.

All of this information is stored on our IT Housing Management system. Restrictions apply and staff can only access the information relevant to their role and fulfilling their responsibilities.

### **Who the personal information relates to**

We collect and hold personal information about:

- **Tenants/Applicants** - This includes current, former and potential tenants who live in our properties or access our support and other services and includes members of their family and people associated with them.
- **Visitors** – This includes visitors that make enquiries to us and on occasion visitors to our website.

### **What is Personal Data?**

Personal data means data which relate to a living individual who can be identified –

(a) from those data, or

(b) from those data and other information which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of, the data controller,

and includes any expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of the data controller or any other person in respect of the individual.

This information was taken from the Information Commissioner's Office website; [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) .

### **What is Sensitive Personal Data?**

This relates to information concerning a data subject's racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union activities, physical or mental health, sexual life, or details of criminal offences.

This information was taken from the Information Commissioner's Office website; [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) .

### **How SHS uses this information**

We keep records to allow us to:

- Make allocations of accommodation
- Manage tenancies including collecting rent and service charges
- Provide a repairs and maintenance service
- Offer help with debts and benefits

- Provide support services which help tenants achieve their goals
- Provide care and support for older and vulnerable tenants
- Keep in touch with our tenants to understand your needs and preferences to better direct our services and to invite you to events
- Prevent and detect crime and resolve disputes
- Prevent and detect fraud (particularly tenancy or benefit fraud) and money laundering
- Promote safety and the quiet enjoyment of our neighbourhoods and communities
- Promote equal opportunities and fair treatment for all our tenants
- Provide information you request from us
- Meet our legal obligations, including those owed to our funders or regulators.

### **“Sensitive” personal information**

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 certain personal information is classified as “sensitive”.

Sensitive data is information relating to physical or mental health, sexual orientation and religion/beliefs and is voluntary information; you do not need to provide this information to us.

Information relating to allegations of criminal offences and criminal convictions and offences must be declared on any housing application/transfer form; this information is obligatory and we have a legitimate purpose for requesting the information.

When we collect specific sensitive data we will notify you of how we will use it (e.g. Tenant Profiling data), including who it may be shared with, and seek your consent to this.

We minimise our holding and use of sensitive categories of personal information. However, given the services we provide, there are times when we use it to assist in providing/accessing services for you e.g. when helping someone to access support and care services.

### **Direct marketing**

SHS would like to provide you with information about events, services and other information which we think you may find interesting. We may send you such information by post, email or contact you by telephone.

You can let us know at any time how you prefer to be contacted or if you do not want us to contact you with this information.

**We never provide your personal information to other companies for their marketing purposes.**

### **Sharing your information**

Your personal information will be kept secure and confidential. Our staff have restricted access to personal information on a “need to know” basis.

We may share information with contractors, or agencies we work with, such as Local Authorities, Social Services, Police, other social landlords. We will also disclose information as required by law.

In particular, please be aware:

- Your name, address and telephone numbers will be shared with our contractors that need to carry out work to your home. This may also include sensitive information that we feel is relevant in providing this service e.g. the tenant has difficulty walking; contractors must allow sufficient time to answer the front door.
- Current or forwarding addresses may be shared with utility companies and Council Tax offices to ensure billing details are correct.
- If you default on any tenancy conditions, information about you may be provided to authorised debt recovery agencies, to enable them to recover the debt. This may affect future applications for tenancies, credit and insurance.
- We may discuss your financial situation, rent payments (including any arrears) and any claims made for welfare benefits with an external debt advice agency, welfare rights advisor, the housing benefit department or the local authorities housing advice and homeless prevention team to make sure that benefits are paid correctly.
- We may pass your contact information to a third party to conduct surveys and research on our behalf which allow us to gather feedback and improve the services we offer you e.g. the Tenant Satisfaction Survey. The third party will be bound to strict terms and conditions outlined by us and will not share your data with other organisations. Should you choose not to participate in the surveys the third party will securely destroy your data.
- We may share your National Insurance number to verify your Universal Credit application and manage these payments. We may also share your National Insurance number in order to prevent and investigate tenancy and right to buy applications fraud.

### **National Fraud initiative**

SHS may participate in the National Fraud initiative (NFI) data matching exercise carried out by the Cabinet Office. Our participation in NFI assists in the prevention and detection of fraud against SHS and organisations within the public sector. We participate on a voluntary basis and provide the Minister for the Cabinet Office with particular sets of data for matching

Data matching involves comparing computer records held by one body against other computer records held by the same or another body to see how far they match. This is usually personal information such as your date of birth.

Computerised data matching allows fraudulent claims and payments to be identified. Where a match is found it may indicate that there is an inconsistency which requires



further investigation. No assumption can be made as to whether there is fraud, error or other explanation until an investigation is carried out.

The use of data by the Cabinet Office in a data matching exercise is carried out with statutory authority under Part 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. It does not require the consent of the individuals concerned under the Data Protection Act 1998. Data matching by the Cabinet Office is subject to a Code of Practice.

Further information on the NFI is detailed in the Cabinet Office's fair processing notice.

### **How long SHS keeps your data**

SHS has a document retention policy which specifies SHS' approach to the storage of data.

All tenancy records are retained for 1 year following the expiry of the tenancy. Tenancies ended with a debt of £50 or more are retained for 5 years.

### **Your rights**

You have the right to ask us in writing not to process your personal information if it is causing or likely to cause substantial damage or distress, or for the purpose of direct marketing.

There may be other specific circumstances where you wish for us to stop processing your data, such as if you agreed to take part in a survey or signed up to an optional service.

SHS does need to maintain certain records to enable us to provide you with the services you enjoy and also to meet the requirements of our Housing Regulator.

You have the right to access any personal information we hold about you. If you would like copies of some specific information from your files, we will try to provide it as quickly as possible. Please contact the Data Controller to discuss this.

The new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) introduced 8 rights as follows:

#### Right to be Informed:

Before data is collected, a data subject has the right to know how it will be collected, processed, and stored, and for what purposes.

#### Right to Access:

After data is collected, a data subject has the right to know how it has been collected, processed, and stored, what data exists, and for what purposes.

#### Right to Correction (Rectification):

A data subject has the right to have incorrect or incomplete data corrected

#### Right to Erasure ("right to be forgotten"):\*

A data subject has the right to have personal data permanently deleted (apart from when we have a legitimate reason for holding this data).

### Right to Restriction of Processing:

A data subject has the right to block or suppress personal data being processed or used.

### Right to Data Portability:

A data subject has the right to move, copy, or transfer personal data from one data controller to another, in a safe and secure way, in a commonly used and machine-readable format. Wherever technically possible, this also includes the right to have the data transferred directly from one controller to another without the data subject having to handle the data.

### Right to Object to Processing:

A data subject has the right to object to being subject to public authorities or companies processing their data without explicit consent. A data subject also has the right to stop personal data from being included in direct marketing databases.

### Right Not to be Subjected to Automated Decision Making:

A data subject has the right to object to being subject to public authorities or companies processing their data without explicit consent. A data subject also has the right to stop personal data from being included in direct marketing databases.

(Much of this information has been taken from [www.helpsystems.com](http://www.helpsystems.com))

\*The ICO advises that individuals have a right to have personal data erased and to prevent processing in specific circumstances:

- Where the personal data is no longer necessary in relation to the purpose for which it was originally collected/processed
- When the individual withdraws consent
- When the individual objects to the processing and there is no overriding legitimate interest for continuing the processing
- The personal data was unlawfully processed (e.g. otherwise in breach of the GDPR).
- The personal data has to be erased in order to comply with a legal obligation.

SHS may refuse to erase the data in certain circumstances. These are:

- In order to comply with a legal obligation or for the performance of a public interest task or exercise of official authority;
- for public health purposes in the public interest;
- archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific research historical research or statistical purposes; or
- the exercise or defense of legal claims.

If you require a substantial amount of your personal information, there is a formal process for this, under the Data Protection Act 1998, known as a Subject Access Request (SAR).

You also have the right to claim compensation if we fail to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 and you suffer damage as a result.

You have the right to lodge a complaint with the ICO if you feel that SHS has not managed your data as it should. Further information can be found on their website at [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

### **What you need to know about making a SAR:**

- The right of subject access under the Data Protection Act 1998 is an individual one. This means that we cannot process joint requests – they have to be treated separately.
- You can write to us to make your request and, if necessary, we will provide you with a SAR form for completion. Please write to the Data controller, Pat Shaw House, 13 – 19 Ventnor Road, Sutton SM2 6AQ
- We will require proof of your identity and address – we will let you know this when we receive your request.
- When we receive your request and have confirmed your identity to our satisfaction, we shall respond and provide your information within 1 calendar month.

### **Changes to our privacy notice**

This privacy notice will be updated to reflect changes either to the way in which we operate or changes to data protection legislation. We will bring any significant changes to your attention but to make sure that you keep up to date, we suggest that you revisit this notice from time to time.

### **Contacting us**

We welcome any queries you may have regarding this privacy notice, or any information we hold about you. Please contact:

The Data Controller  
Pat Shaw House  
13 – 19 Ventnor Road  
Sutton  
SM2 6AQ

### **Other Resources**

The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) is the UK's independent body who upholds information rights in the public interest. Their contact details are below:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545 745 if you prefer to use a national rate number

Fax: 01625 524 510

Website: <https://ico.org.uk/>

# Lettable Standard

## Making sure your property is in a good state of repair

### **A GUIDE TO OUR LETTINGS STANDARD**

#### **Service Standards for letting a property**

Before you have moved in to your home, Sutton Housing Society Ltd will have carried out some general repairs and maintenance on the property, to ensure that your new home meets the Sutton Housing Society Ltd.'s Lettable Standard.

After you have moved in, we may need to carry out further repairs, but we will let you know about this when you sign for your tenancy.

Sutton Housing Society Ltd really wants you to be happy and comfortable in your home. We will provide you with a property that you may need to decorate and personalise to make it your own.

If you feel that your new home does not meet our Lettable Standard, please contact the Asset Manager on 020 8642 1500 to discuss this.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

#### **When you move in to your home, we will ensure that your property:**

- Is clean and clear
- Is weather tight, secure and structurally sound
- Has a working smoke alarm
- Is free from unsafe asbestos based materials
- Is free of any vermin or pests

#### **Cleanliness – we will ensure that:**

- Your home and garden (if appropriate) is clear of any rubbish, including any sheds and outbuildings
- The property is cleaned to a good standard, with no dirty surfaces
- The bathroom is clean and free of lime scale
- All fixtures and fittings are clean
- All floors are clean and clear

#### **Decorations – we will ensure that:**

- All Independent Housing for Older People and Older Persons accommodation is re-let in a well decorated condition
- All general needs homes are in a decent state, without the need for onerous decorating work
- Plastered walls and ceilings are in a reasonable condition, with notable picture hook holes filled
- Any polystyrene ceiling tiles are removed and ceilings made good.

## **UTILITIES**

### **Electrics and Gas**

#### **We will ensure that:**

- The meters have been read before you move in to ensure you aren't paying for someone else's electricity or gas
- A visual electrical safety check has been carried out on your home before you move in; we will provide you with a copy of the test certificate if an additional inspection, over and above the visual inspection, has been carried out
- The gas pipe work and appliances in your home are safe before you move in and you receive a copy of the gas safety certificate.

### **Heating and Hot Water**

#### **We will ensure that:**

- Your home has hot and cold water
- Your home has appropriate gas or electric heating
- All radiators/storage heaters are fixed securely
- Any vents and airbricks are clear
- Heat is well circulated within all rooms to allow adequate ventilation

### **Energy Performance Certificates**

#### **We will ensure that:**

- You receive a copy of the energy performance certificate that outlines the energy usage in your home.

### **Bathrooms**

#### **We will ensure that:**

- The bath, toilet and wash basin are clean and free from cracks, chips, stains and leaks and that overflows run clear
- Plugs, taps, handles and cisterns are in good working order
- All plugs and chains are in place
- We provide a tiled splash back around the bath and hand basin
- The toilet seat is clean and well fitted
- We supply non-slip, waterproof vinyl flooring, if the existing flooring is unsafe.

### **Kitchens**

#### **We will ensure that:**

- Kitchen worktops, cupboards, shelves and drawers clean and in a sound condition
- We provide an electrical or gas cooking point. Please remember that if you are installing a gas cooker you must by law, employ an engineer that is on the Gas Safe Register to do this. An electric cooker must also be fitted by a qualified person.
- We provide a stainless steel sink top and draining unit

- The worktop is free from extensive damage, is an easily cleaned, waterproof work surface with a wall tile splash back
- We provide food storage space of at least a double base unit and double wall unit in the kitchen (space permitting)
- We supply non-slip, waterproof vinyl flooring, where existing flooring is unsafe
- There is space for a fridge, cooker and washing machine connections where reasonably possible; (in Independent Housing for Older People's accommodation there are laundry rooms provided)
- We provide, in General Needs and Older Persons accommodation (non Independent Housing for Older People schemes) water supply and waste connection points for your washing machine
- We provide adequate ventilation.

## **Doors and Windows**

### **We will ensure that:**

- All windows are in good condition, secure, open and close freely and are safe and watertight
- All external doors are in good condition, safe, secure and weather tight
- Door entry systems are working
- We install replacement locks to all external doors (not communal doors) and provide two sets of keys
- We fit at least one 5 lever mortice or multipoint lock, where the type of door and fire safety requirements allow
- The front door where possible will be fitted with a safety chain and spy hole (not applicable in Independent Housing for Older People schemes due to health and safety requirements)
- All front doors have a visible and clear door number in place
- The letterbox is secure and a cover is in place
- All internal doors will open and close freely and are fitted with suitable door latches and handles
- If the internal doors are glazed and the glass is not safety glass, we will fit film over the glass
- We remove any locks or bolts from internal doors, apart from the WC/bathroom
- We fit safety limiters to all windows of first floor level or above where this is feasible
- We supply window lock keys where we are able.

## **Internal Floors and Stairs**

### **We will ensure that:**

- All floors are in a reasonable state to receive floor covering; any missing or broken floor tiles/floorboards are replaced.
- We leave gripper rods, where in good condition
- If in very good condition, carpets or suitable floor covering left by the previous tenant will be gifted to you. This becomes your responsibility to remove at the end of your tenancy
- A fixed and safe handrail is fitted to all stairs

## **Insulation**

### **We will ensure that:**

- Loft areas are adequately insulated and tanks and pipes in the roof space are lagged.

## **Gardens and Outside Areas**

### **We will ensure that:**

- All paths, hard-standings and driveways are in a safe condition
- Excessive undergrowth is cleared
- All gates open and close freely and are fitted with a suitable latch or lock
- We endeavour to let you know which fencing, hedges, walls (boundaries) belong to your new home
- Collapsed/damaged fencing or walls belonging to the property are repaired, whilst vacant or as planned works
- If left in a safe and usable state, we leave garden sheds left by the previous tenant; these will be gifted to you and become your responsibility
- We fill in any fish ponds

## **Guttering, Roofs, Downpipes and Drains**

### **We will ensure that:**

- The roof is weather tight
- All drains, guttering and downpipes are free from blockages or plant growth
- Grids are fitted to drain gullies and that any concrete surrounds are intact
- Manhole covers are safe and in a good condition

## **Aids and Adaptations**

### **We will ensure that:**

- We leave disabled adaptations where serviceable
- Grab rails are secure
- Existing fitted shower seats are secure and hygienic
- We supply lever taps where fittings require replacing in Independent Housing for Older People accommodation

If you need aids and adaptations to be provided, this is likely to involve an Occupational Therapist visiting you once you have moved in, to assess your individual requirements. This will ensure that you receive the 'right' aid equipment or property adaptations, to help you in your new home.

### **Examples of aids and adaptations:**

- Waist height electrical sockets
- Lever Taps
- Grab-rails
- Walk-in showers
- Community alarms (in Independent Housing for Older People schemes)
- External handrails
- Door entrance ramps

**In addition- we will ensure that:**

- We visit you within 6 – 8 weeks of your move into your new home to check you are happy with your tenancy and answer any concerns you may have.
- We inform you, should we plan to upgrade your kitchen or bathroom and consult you about the design and choice of colours
- We inform you, should we plan to replace your heating system, roof and windows
- We advise you of any plans for refurbishment of communal areas.
- We provide a copy of any relevant communal area cleaning/grounds maintenance schedules on the notice boards in communal areas.

## EMERGENCY AND USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

### EMERGENCIES

If you have an emergency between the hours of 9.30am and 4.00pm, please telephone the Sutton Housing Society office on **020 8642 1500**.

If the emergency is outside these times, please telephone the Mole Valley Emergency Line on **0300 123 7718**.

### SOME OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

Fire/Police/Ambulance: **999**  
NHS Direct: **111**  
Gas Emergency Service: **0800 111999**  
Electric Emergency Service: **0800 783 8866**

Water Emergency Service:  
South East Surrey – **01737 772000**  
Thames Water – **0800 316 9800**

Gas Public Enquiry Line: **0870 608 1524**  
(for information regarding the previous supplier)

Electricity Public Enquiry Line: **0800 029 4283**  
(for information regarding the previous supplier)