

GENERAL NEEDS

CUSTOMER HANDBOOK



Contents

Introduction	4
How to Contact BCHA	5
How can Customer Services help you?	6
CORE at BCHA	7
Customer Satisfaction Survey	7
Compliments & Complaints	8
Making a Complaint	8
Data Protection	10
Freedom of Information & Privacy Notice	10
Subject Access Request	10
Your Tenancy	11
Types of Tenancies	11
Grounds for Eviction	12
Your Rights as a Customer	13
Possession Action	13
Change of Tenancy Conditions	13
Right to Take in Lodgers	14
Can someone Else Join my Tenancy?	14
Right of Succession	14
Mutual Exchange & Homeswapper	15
Right to Consultation	17
Tenancy Visits	17
Tenancy Support	18
Death of a Customer	19
Giving Notice When a Customer has Died	19
Joint Tenancy	19
Sole Tenancy	19
Nuisance, Antisocial Behaviour & Neighbourhood Disputes	20
Safeguarding	24
Important Tenancy Information	24
Floor Coverings	24
Contents Insurance	24
Item Storage	24
Motability Scooters	25
Gardens & Rubbish in Gardens	25
Sheds, Outbuildings & Fences	25
Home Improvements & Alterations	26
Pets	26
Running a Business	27
Televisions Aerials, Satellite Dishes & CCTV	27
Aids & Adaptations	27
Your Neighbourhood	27
Cleaning	28

Managing Communal Areas	28
Fire Safety	28
Raising Concerns on Fire Safety	30
Communal Gardens	30
Security	31
Smoking	31
Grounds Maintenance	31
Rubbish Disposal	31
Bonfires	31
Vehicles & Parking	32
Estate Improvement	32
Moving Home & Giving Notice	33
Condition of the Property When Handing Back	34
Paying Rent	35
Claiming Benefits & Universal Credit	36
Problems Paying your Rent	37
Rent Arrears	38
Seeking Possession & Possession Proceedings	38
Eviction Proceedings	38
Repairs & Maintenance in Your Home	39
Reporting a Repair	39
How Quickly Repairs are Completed	41
Post Repair Inspections	43
Annual Servicing	43
What is Your Responsibility	44
DIY	44
Vandalism & Neglect	45
Condensation & Preventing Mould	45
Security	48
Health & Safety	48
Electrical Safety	48
Gas Safety	49
Carbon Monoxide	49
Homes Fit for Habitation	51
Asbestos	51
Legionella	52
Making Your Voice Heard & Getting Involved	52
Ways to Get Involved	53
Consumer Standards	54
Customer Engagement	55
Neighbourhood Management	55
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	55



Introduction

Welcome to your Customer Handbook, a comprehensive guide designed to support you throughout your journey as a resident of our housing association.

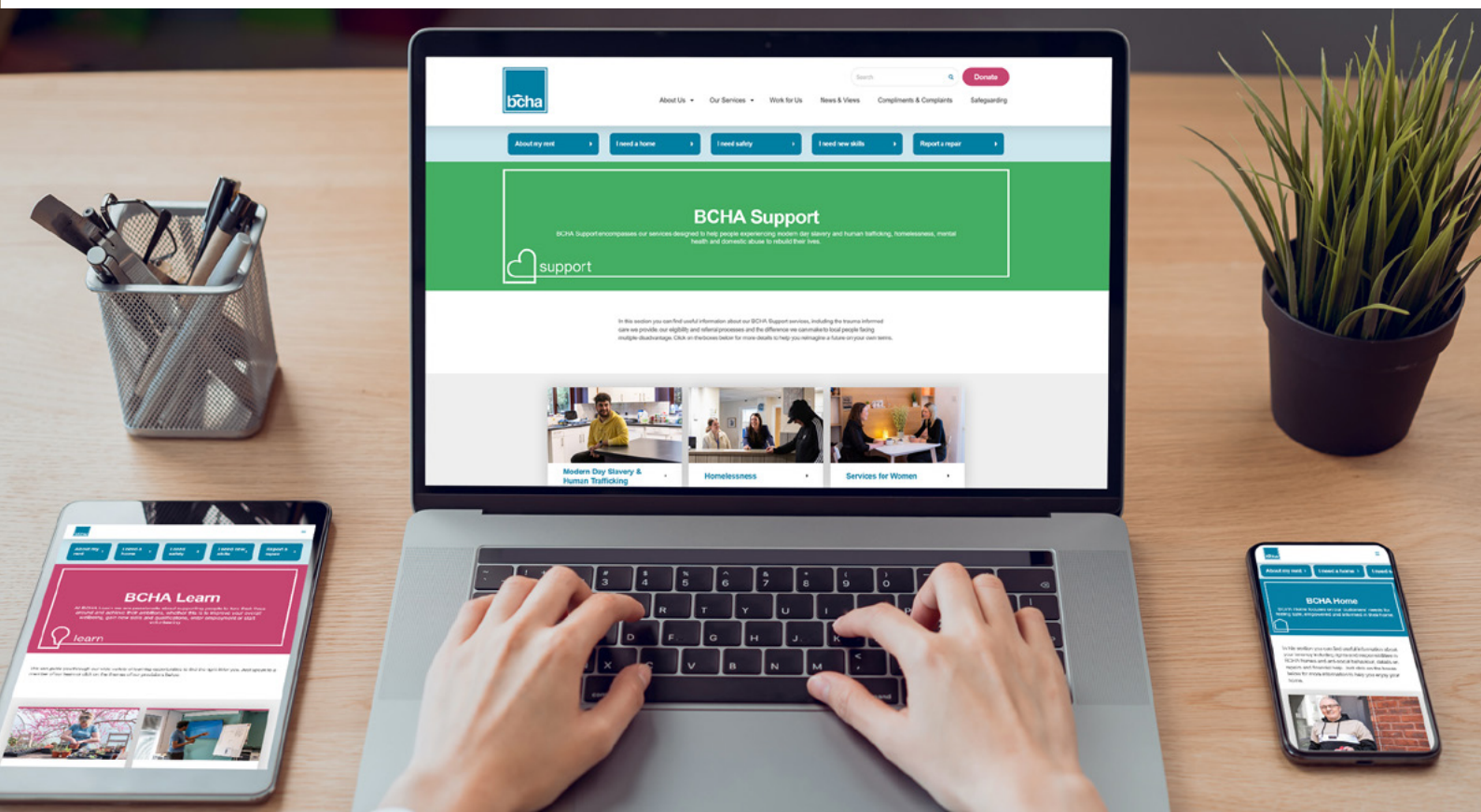
Within this booklet, you will find essential information about your rights and responsibilities, services available to you, and useful resources to enhance your living experience.

Our commitment is to foster a safe, inclusive, and vibrant community where everyone feels at home. Whether you are a new Customer or a long-standing member of our community, we hope this handbook serves as a valuable reference for you and helps you make the most of your housing association experience.



How to Contact BCHA

BCHA has a Customer Service Team who are available to all of our customers from Monday - Friday between the hours of 9am and 5pm.

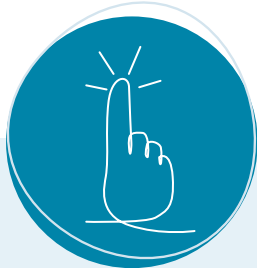


The Customer Service Team will likely be able to deal with your reason for contact over the phone or email, however if we are unable to resolve your query we will put you in touch with the relevant member of BCHA to help.

After 5pm, BCHA has an out of hours service only for emergency repairs. If you need to speak with someone out of hours relating to a repair in your property, then you can call **01202 410 500** and you will automatically be put through to our Out of Hours team.



Call our Customer Services Team:
01202 410 500



Visit us online:
www.bcha.org.uk



Email us:
customerservices@bcha.org.uk



Visit us in person:
The Factory, 14 Alder Hills, Poole, Dorset, BH12 4AS

How can Customer Services help you?

Our Customer Service Team is the first point of contact for our customers, they are available Monday - Friday between the hours of 9am - 5pm. We are focused on ensuring our customers receive great service here at BCHA and that we can help resolve the reason for your call the first time you call.

We are committed to ensuring that all our services are accessible to everyone in our community. We recognise the importance of inclusivity and strive to meet the diverse needs of our residents. If you require information in an alternative format, such as large print, braille, audio, a language other than English, or some other way, please let us know. Our team is dedicated to assisting you and will work with you to provide the necessary support. Your feedback is invaluable to us as we continually improve our services to foster an inclusive environment for all.

The below is not an exhaustive list, but gives an overview of what we can help you with:

- 🌀 Acknowledging and responding to any enquiries either by phone or email
- 🌀 Updating your contact details, preferences or any change in circumstance
- 🌀 Leading our Customer Profiling Process
- 🌀 Reporting and scheduling repairs
- 🌀 Logging and recording complaints and compliments
- 🌀 Liaising with your Tenancy and Income Officers for call backs
- 🌀 Receiving and co-ordinating donations
- 🌀 Taking rent payments
- 🌀 Issuing Foodbank vouchers
- 🌀 Sending any relevant or necessary documents to you by post or email
- 🌀 Receiving and recording any post sent by yourself to BCHA

BCHA have a set standard for Customer Service, ensuring that we maintain the highest level of support and satisfaction for our customers. For detailed information about our Customer Service Standards, please request a copy of our Customer Service Policy.



CORE at BCHA

CORE stands for the Continuous Recording of Lettings and Sales in Social Housing in England. This is a national information source that records information on characteristics of both private registered providers and local authority new social housing customers and the homes they rent. The collection of data provides statistical information that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government produces on Social Housing lettings.

The information provided as part of the CORE requirement is anonymised and does not include information such as your full name, names of any of your household members or full address information.

More information regarding CORE and other BCHA Data Privacy Notices can be found on the BCHA website.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

We are continuously reviewing our Customer Service Offer and our effectiveness of dealing with our customers queries and needs, therefore we do have a Customer Satisfaction Survey which you can complete relating to our Customer Service Team. Simply scan the QR code below which will take you directly to our survey.

We welcome feedback all year round to improve services for our customers. Get in touch today to share your experience.



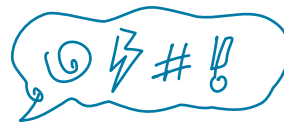
Compliments and Complaints

BCHA aims to provide all our customers with an excellent service, however sometimes we may not get it right or we may make a mistake. BCHA records compliments to acknowledge where things are going well, and we use feedback from complaints so we can continue to improve our services.

You can report Complaints to us in any of the following ways:

- 📧 You can log a complaint on our website www.bcha.org.uk
- 📞 Call a member of our Customer Services Team on **01202 410 500**
- ✉️ Send an email to us at complaints@bcha.org.uk
- 📍 Write to us at our head office - **The Factory, 14 Alder Hills, Poole, BH12 4AS**
- 👤 You can also raise a complaint with any member of staff, who will pass this directly to the Customer Service Team

Making a Complaint



If you wish to make a complaint, please ensure you let us know the following



Your details:
name, address
or property the
complaint relates
to, a phone
number and an
email address
where possible.



**How you would
like us to
communicate** with
you during the
complaint (phone,
email or post)



**Details of the
complaint:** what
went wrong?



**Your expected
outcome:** what
would you like us
to do?

What is the Complaints Process?

We will acknowledge your complaint within 2 working days with an acknowledgement letter. The letter will inform you which manager will be investigating your complaint and working towards a resolution with yourself. BCHA has a 2-stage complaints process, you can see an overview of these stages below.

Stage 1



The investigating manager who has been investigating your complaint has 10 working days (from date of acknowledgement) to review and respond to your complaint with an outcome. This outcome may advise what we have done to make things right, or what we propose to do with an action plan ensuring resolution.

If you are happy with the outcome, we will close the complaint. If you are not happy with the resolution offered at Stage 1, let us know you wish to progress the complaint to Stage 2, within 14 days of receiving the Stage 1 outcome letter. If you progress to Stage 2, you will again receive an acknowledgement letter within 2 working days. The letter will inform you what Head of or Director will be investigating your complaint at this stage.

Stage 2



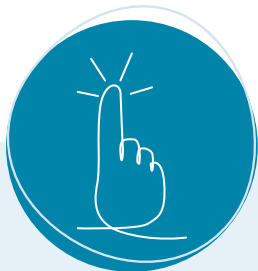
At this stage your complaint will be escalated to a Director or Head of service, who will contact you and aim to resolve the complaint with a proposed solution within 15 working days.

If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint after Stages 1 and 2, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman.

Contacting the Ombudsman



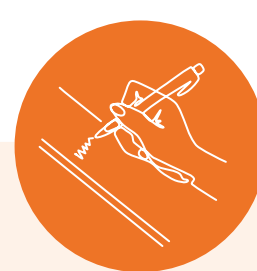
Call the Housing Ombudsman on
0300 111 3000



Visit them online:
www.housingombudsman.org.uk



Email at:
info@housingombudsman.org.uk



Write to them:
Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

Data Protection

BCHA will seek to comply with our obligations under Data Protection law, including the General Data Protection Regulation (and where relevant, the Data Protection Act 2018). You can find our current data protection registration on the information commission website or you can ask us for details.

Freedom of Information and Privacy Notice

We may, in consequence of your tenancy with us, disclose personal information we hold about you or your family to third parties as permitted by Data Protection Law during the course of your tenancy.

Examples of third parties we may make disclosure to are other landlords, the police, Housing Benefit officers or other public agencies and those acting on our behalf (such as contractors) that may need to take action. We will seek to ensure that we have a legal reason to do so and to maintain the security of the information in questions.

If you would like to view a copy of our Data Protection Policy or our Privacy Notices, these can be found on the BCHA website: www.bcha.org.uk



Customer Profiling

At BCHA, we believe that understanding our customers' needs is essential to providing the best possible service and ensuring a vibrant community, which is why we are implementing a customer profiling process within BCHA.

By gathering information about our customers and their feedback, we can tailor our services, resources and communication to better align with what our customers want and need.

As part of the process, we will complete annual Tenancy Audits with you between the months of January and March. The audits will allow us to make sure the information we have for you is correct, such as your contact details, medical conditions and communication preferences.

You can update your details or preferences at any time by calling our Customer Services Team on 01202 410 500, or by email at customerservices@bcha.org.uk

Subject Access Request

You have a right to access the personal information that BCHA processes about you if you wish to. To do this, please complete the Customer Data Request Form on the BCHA website.

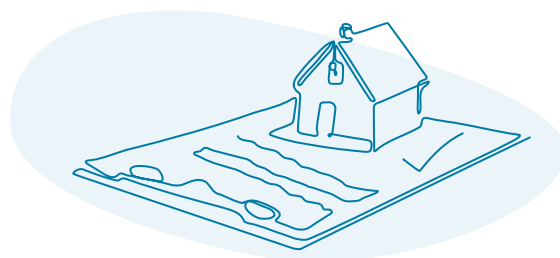
Once you have completed the form you will need to send it to us either via email at companysecretary@bcha.org.uk or by post to our Head Office address: **The Factory, 14 Alder Hills, Poole, Dorset, BH12 4AS.**

Once we have received your request, we will confirm this with you. As a part of this process, we may ask you to provide us with a form of ID. We will let you know within 28 days if your form has been accepted. If your form has been accepted, we will fulfil your data request within 28 days. If your form has not been accepted, we will inform you of the reasons why within 28 days.

Your Tenancy

BCHA is committed to ensuring its homes meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS). This is a technical standard that sets the minimum quality of standards for social housing. The DHS defines a decent home as one that:

- ☉ Meets the statutory minimum standard for housing
- ☉ Is in reasonable repair
- ☉ Has reasonable modern facilities and services
- ☉ Provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort



More information relating to the DHS can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Types of Tenancy

The rights and responsibilities you have as a customer depends on the type of tenancy you have. Your tenancy agreement is a legal document that tells you all of the rules about living in your property. Below is an overview of the types of Tenancy we provide at BCHA and a brief overview of what those tenancies mean.

Starter Tenancy



These tenancies usually last 12 months and are like a “trial” period. You will always be given a starter tenancy, unless you are an existing customer. After your starter tenancy has ended, you will automatically switch to an assured non shorthold tenancy, on the same terms as your starter tenancy. If you have breached the terms of your tenancy during your tenancy, we can:

- ☉ Serve a notice on you to extend the introductory period or serve a notice requiring possession on the property and
- ☉ Start court proceedings against you.

If you continue to breach your tenancy conditions and we take you to court, the judge has discretion and will give us possession of the property. Subsequently, you may not be eligible for re-housing by us, or any other registered social landlord.

Assured Shorthold Tenancy

This is a Tenancy which gives you a legal right to live in accommodation for a set period of time. The tenancy will end if you:

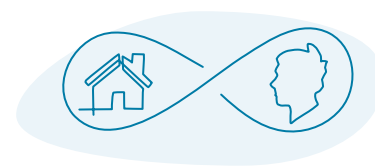
- ☉ Choose to leave the property and give us notice
- ☉ We take action to evict you from the property



Assured Tenancy

These tenancies are lifelong agreements, which will only end if you:

- ☎ Choose to leave the property and give us notice
- ☎ We take action to evict you from the property



BCHA would only look to evict you from the property if you break any of the terms within your tenancy agreement. If BCHA were to take action to evict you from the property, we would:

- ☎ Serve a notice requiring possession of the property
- ☎ Start court proceedings against you
- ☎ Follow the court process to be granted a court order for eviction

For us to apply to court, we would have to have evidence that you have breached one of the 17 grounds detailed in your Tenancy Agreement. More information relating to this can be found overleaf.



Grounds for Eviction

A summary of the current (November 2024) grounds for possession (Schedule 2 Housing Act 1988) can be found at the end of your Tenancy Agreement, normally on pages 37, 38 and 39. Please note, this is only a summary. We may rely upon the full terms of the grounds set out in the Act.

If any of the grounds numbered 1 - 8 set out in Schedule 2 Housing Act 1988 are established, the court must make an order for possession.

If any of the grounds numbered 9 - 17 set out in Schedule 2 Housing Act 1988 are established, the court may make an order giving us possession of your home. This is only after considering all of the circumstances and if the court is satisfied it is reasonable to do so.



Your Rights as a Customer

Your tenancy agreement is a legal contract between you, the customer, and BCHA, your landlord, and sets out the rights and responsibilities of both parties. Please refer to your original tenancy agreement issued to you when you signed your tenancy and any subsequent revisions that may have been issued to you.

Possession Action

We can act against you if any of the tenancy conditions have been breached.

We must serve on you a Notice in statutory form if we intend to take possession proceedings against you for breaching your tenancy conditions.

The Notice will be served on you in person, leaving it at your property or last known address, or sending it by first class or registered post.

We must explain the reasons why we are acting, and you will usually have four weeks to put things right. Your Tenancy Officer will monitor the situation during this period and offer you the appropriate advice.

We will not take any further action against you if the situation is resolved. However, the Notice is valid for a year, and we can act against you at any time over the following twelve months if you do not comply with your tenancy conditions.

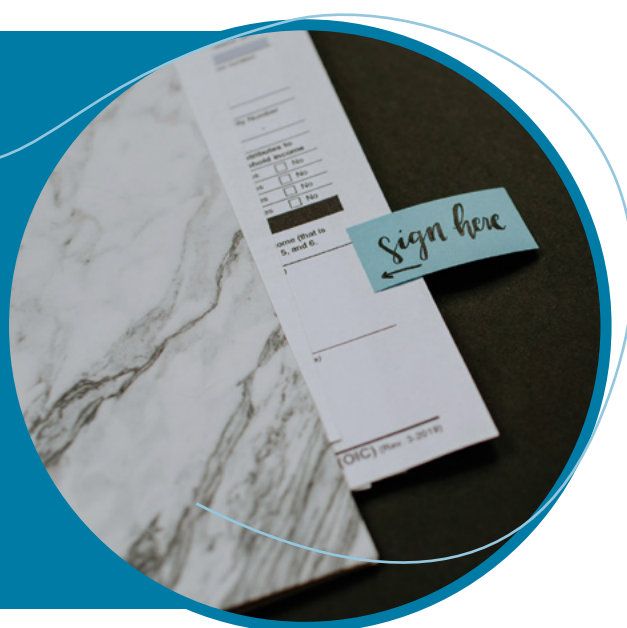
The judge will decide whether it is reasonable to give us possession of your home if we take you to court. We will seek to obtain a warrant to evict you if the judge gives us possession of your home and you do not leave by the required date. The judge will decide if our request is reasonable and if so, we will instruct a bailiff to evict you.

You have the right to defend your actions in court, either personally or through a representative. We strongly advise you to seek independent legal advice from either a solicitor or the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

Change of Tenancy Conditions

A tenancy agreement can be changed if you (the customer) and BCHA (your landlord) agree. BCHA will give you notice of, and consult you on any proposed changes.

If you agree, the change will be recorded in writing, either by drawing up a new written document setting out the terms of the tenancy or by amending the existing written tenancy agreement



Right to Take in Lodgers

You can take in lodgers, but you should contact the Tenancy team first for permission. You must not allow your property to become overcrowded.

You must inform the council for council tax purposes if you take in a lodger. If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Universal Credit, they would also need to be informed should you take in a lodger.

Can Someone Else Join my Tenancy?

You do not have the automatic right to add people who live with you to your tenancy. If someone else is living with you, you should tell us, and you should also tell Universal Credit or Housing Benefit if in receipt of those benefits.

If you want to add someone as a joint customer, you need BCHA's permission. You can get this by requesting permission from your Tenancy Officer. BCHA has the right to refuse the request. Some reasons we may consider refusing the request are:

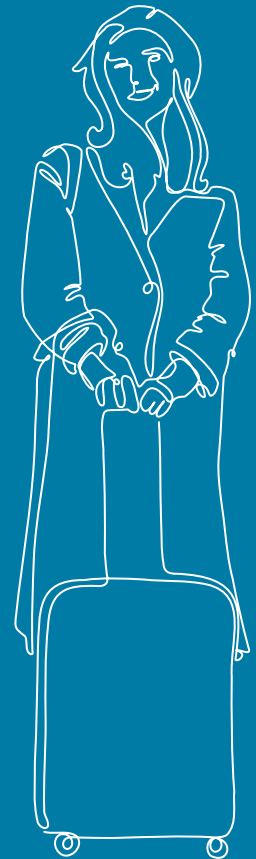
- ⌚ The previous terms of your tenancy have not been met for another issue with your tenancy.
- ⌚ We have started taking action against you for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour.

You can ask BCHA to add someone as a joint customer if they:

- ⌚ Are your husband, wife or civil partner.
- ⌚ Have been living with you as part of your household for at least one year.

We may ask for proof that the person has been living with you. You can do this with utility bills, bank statements and any official letters.

We could refuse to add a joint customer if we have evidence that you plan to move out soon. Speak to your Tenancy Officer if we have refused to let you add someone to your tenancy.



Right of Succession

When one joint customer dies, the other customer automatically becomes the sole customer. This is known as survivorship and happens regardless of tenancy type. The surviving customer is treated as a successor to the tenancy.

There can only be one statutory succession. This means that if you are a successor yourself, there cannot be a further succession.

If you're an adult son or daughter living with both parents and a parent dies, the other parent succeeds to the tenancy. If the remaining parent then dies, the son or daughter would not have the right to succeed.

Mutual Exchange

A tenancy exchange is when you swap your home legally with another council or housing association customer. It is often called a mutual exchange.

To do a mutual exchange, you need to:

- 🕒 Find someone to swap homes with
- 🕒 Get written permission from us (BCHA)
- 🕒 Complete all required legal paperwork.

You can swap homes with any council or housing association customer in the UK, provided you both have the right to mutual exchange and that both parties wish to swap properties.



Swap locally or to another part of the country

The principle can work between any locations or even all in the same street. You are not restricted to your current landlord as all social housing landlords are required to allow a mutual exchange, as long as you meet the necessary criteria. The key is to ensure that everyone has looked around the properties involved and are happy to move.

Swaps involving more than one property

You can either home swap with one customer, known as a direct exchange, or you could try and find a multi-way swap. There are no limits to how many people can be involved in a home swap chain, however the more you have in the chain, the more complicated it can get. There is always a chance that someone may change their mind.

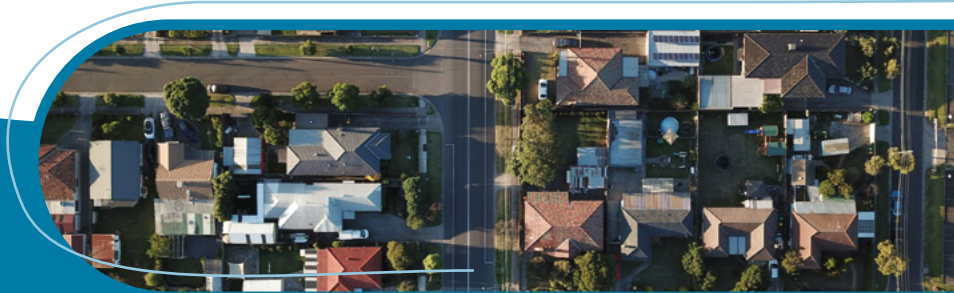
Multi way mutual exchanges are becoming increasingly popular as they give you more ways of getting into the property you want, so don't dismiss them because you think they might be more complicated.

Am I eligible?

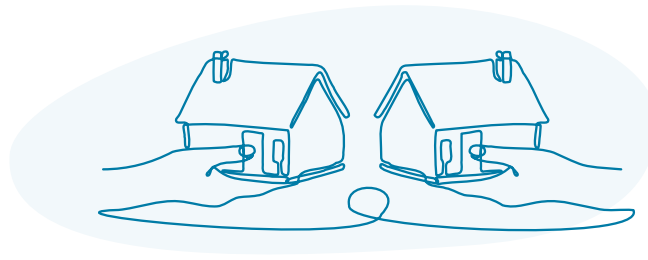
You can only swap your home if:

- 🕒 You aren't in debt with your rent.
- 🕒 The other person's landlord is happy for the exchange to happen.
- 🕒 You aren't moving to a property where you will be overcrowded or have more space than you need.
- 🕒 You get our permission in writing and there is no ongoing legal action relating to your tenancy.

There may be other conditions depending on your type of tenancy. If you are unsure whether you are eligible, please contact us to see if you are able to exchange.



BCHA is signed up to HomeSwapper, a national register of social housing customers looking to swap homes. The service can be accessed online at www.homeswapper.co.uk. If you would like to move by mutual exchange, you will need to register your details on the HomeSwapper website. If you need any help with this process, please contact your Tenancy Officer.



Mutual Exchange Refused

There are, by law, grounds on which we can refuse a mutual exchange. If your application is refused, we will write to you notifying you on what grounds your request has been refused. Full details of the grounds for refusal are contained in Schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1985 (grounds for withholding consent to assignment by way of exchange). You can view this on the Gov Legislation website.

Do not swap homes without permission or the right documents. This could put you both at risk of eviction.

- Ⓢ Where an order is made by the Court requiring you to do so
- Ⓢ We agree to an assignment in writing and in advance.
- Ⓢ Under the right to exchange if that applies

During the first 12 months of the tenancy or any extension period you do not have the right to do this.

Once we tell you that your tenancy has changed to an assured tenancy you can ask for our written permission.



Right to Consultation

There are certain basic rights that a customer has in an assured tenancy in line with the housing act 1985:



The right to live in the accommodation undisturbed.



The right to live in a property in good repair.



The right to information about the tenancy.



Protection from eviction.

New Tenancy Visits

As a new starter or assured shorthold customer you will be visited by a Tenancy Officer in the first six weeks to check you have settled into your new home and to discuss any issues you may have.

If you have a starter tenancy, you will also be visited again by a Tenancy Officer 6 and 9 months into your tenancy. We will check you are complying with your tenancy conditions and decide if you will become an assured customer at the end of the starter period.



General Tenancy Visits

As a BCHA customer, you have the right to be informed about visits for repairs or inspections. This notice is commonly 24 - 48 hours. Any home visits should be scheduled at reasonable times and during normal business hours. If advanced notice has not been given, then you have the right to refuse entry, however this will need to be communicated appropriately. You can review your Tenancy Agreement for any clauses that outline rights and responsibilities of both you and BCHA regarding repair visits and inspections.

In the case of an emergency, such as a severe leak or a fire, we will seek to contact you, however if we cannot we will enter the property without prior notice. This is to ensure the safety of the property and of other residents.

Tenancy Support



The Tenancy, Income and Customer Services Teams offer services designed to help you, when you need it. Our service offers non-judgemental advice and support, and we can put you in touch with agencies to provide practical hands-on support.

We can help with a wide range of matters including:

- 🌀 Dealing with debt (Income team)
- 🌀 Applying for benefits (Income team)
- 🌀 Budgeting and money management (Income team)
- 🌀 Getting food and other essentials if you are in crisis (Customer Service)
- 🌀 Tackling antisocial behaviour or nuisance neighbours (Tenancy)
- 🌀 Accessing services to improve physical and/or mental well-being.



We offer support to our customers who experience Hoarding Disorder to enable you to keep your home in a reasonable condition. We offer non-judgemental support and work alongside you as the customer, to help manage your possessions.

We are here to help in any way we can and offer support over the phone, video conference, at your home or wherever you feel comfortable.

Death of a Customer

Your next of kin should contact the Tenancy team as soon as possible after the death of a customer. A Tenancy Officer will advise your next of kin on what steps you need to take, depending on the tenancy circumstances. Your next of kin should also inform Housing Benefit or Universal Credit if you as the customer were receiving benefits as entitlement will be ceased after death.

If there is no next of kin, we will register a written notice with the Public Trustee.

Giving Notice When a Customer has Died

In the event of a customer death, the next of kin must give us four weeks' written notice and include the death certificate.

Power of Attorney

Where a power of attorney exists, written notice may be given on behalf of the customer if you send a copy of the relevant documentation.



Joint Tenancy:

When one joint customer dies, the other customer automatically becomes the sole customer. This is known as survivorship and happens regardless of the tenancy type. The surviving customer is treated as a successor to the tenancy.

Sole Tenancy:

If the deceased was the only occupier of the property, the tenancy will need to be terminated by the representative for the deceased. Four weeks' written notice is required to terminate the tenancy and a copy of the customers death certificate must also be provided.

If there are other people living at the property at the time of the customers death, they should contact the Tenancy team for advice on whether they have any succession rights.

Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour

Your tenancy conditions state that you have agreed to ensure you, members of your family and other residents or visitors to your property do not cause a nuisance/annoyance to neighbours or other residents of your community.

We aim to encourage everyone to have due consideration for all of their neighbours. We will actively defend people's rights to live in their home free from nuisance and harassment. We will try to resolve nuisance problems without taking court action if possible. Even when legal action is taken, we will continue to talk to the people involved and try to get them to reach an agreement to change their behaviour or settle a dispute.

BCHA Offers...

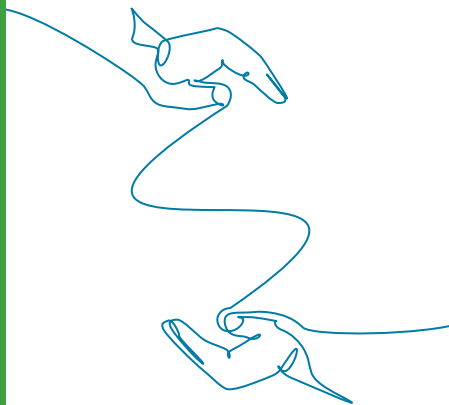
Effective policies and procedures on nuisance and harassment.

Tenancy Officers trained to deal with serious nuisance and harassment cases.

Access to an independent mediation service.

Support for witnesses.

A community based approach to curbing nuisance.



Noise Nuisance

Noise can cause problems depending on how loud it is, how long it lasts, how often it occurs, when it happens and whether it is high or low pitched. We all make noise that affects others and much of it can be avoided.

People who live in flats will be affected more because noise and vibration travel through walls, floors, and ceilings. Please be considerate to your neighbours and think about whether the noise you are making could cause a nuisance and how you can reduce the impact. Simple measures such as closing doors and windows can reduce noise levels significantly.



Neighbourhood Disputes

Disputes with neighbours are often caused by misunderstandings and may be sorted out by talking to each other and reaching a compromise.

If you are experiencing a problem with a neighbour your first step should be to approach them yourself. You could also write to your neighbour if this fails to resolve the problem, explaining how their actions are affecting you and politely ask them to change. You should contact the Tenancy team if the problem continues and explain how you have tried to resolve it.

We will discuss with you how best to manage your complaint and may ask you to complete log sheets. Log sheets can be used as evidence in court so you should make a note of all incidents and relevant information.

Generally, we only become involved in neighbour disputes if there is a serious nuisance and a clear breach of tenancy conditions. You should try and resolve disputes with your neighbour and only contact the Tenancy team if this has not worked or you feel threatened. We can only act if there is evidence of persistent nuisance or harassment.

Mediation

Mediation is often a very effective way of resolving individual neighbour disputes. Any parties involved in a neighbour dispute will be encouraged to consider mediation where it is appropriate.

This involves resolving a problem by both parties talking through the issues and agreeing the next steps with the help of an independent trained mediator. With permission and where appropriate, we will refer to mediation at the earliest opportunity. It is not essential for both parties to meet, but it is encouraged as it helps to achieve a successful outcome.



Harassment

Harassment is interpreted as any incident where the victim or any other person perceives the incident to be harassment. You should call the Police and contact the Tenancy team if you experience harassment or witness an act of harassment.

All reports will be treated in confidence and no action will be taken without your consent. It is a criminal offence to deliberately harass someone, and you will also be breaching your tenancy conditions.

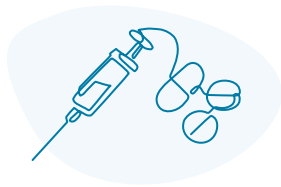
Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse includes any form of mental, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse between people in a close relationship. It may be accompanied by other behaviour such as intimidation, degradation, humiliation, deprivation, systematic criticism, and belittling.

You should contact the Tenancy team if you are experiencing domestic abuse or know someone who is. All reports will be taken seriously and will be dealt with in confidence.



Drugs



We take a very strong approach over drug abuse and work closely with the Police and local people to tackle the use and selling of illegal drugs. Involvement with illegal drugs could lead to you losing your home.

You should contact the Police and the Tenancy team if you suspect there are drug abuse problems in your neighbourhood.

If you find discarded syringes, please contact us and we will arrange for them to be collected and disposed of safely. Never handle a discarded syringe.



Vandalism, Graffiti and Neglect

You are responsible for repairs caused as a result of damage or neglect by you, your family, your visitors, or your pets, including any accidental damage or any alterations you have made.

Please be aware that you will be charged for the full cost of any repair work which we have to carry out as a result of damages caused by yourself. If damage has been caused to your home by criminal action you must report this to the police, so they can investigate the matter. The police will then give you a crime number which you must tell us, so we can carry out repairs needed.

You must not write graffiti and in particular not write threatening, abusive, offensive, or insulting graffiti.

101



The 101 Service is the Police 24 hour non-emergency number to report anti social behaviour or a crime that doesn't need an urgent response. If you need an immediate Police response, then you should always dial 999. The reporting system can be used to report incidents including:

- 📞 Anti-social behaviour
- 📞 Noise and light problems
- 📞 Abandoned vehicles
- 📞 Dumping or fly-tipping

CALL YOUR LOCAL POLICE



101

**IN AN EMERGENCY
ALWAYS CALL 999**



Safeguarding

BCHA will involve the police if the complaint is about a criminal offence or violence. We also involve social workers if children or vulnerable adults are involved. We will always advise you if we are going to contact another party, but we will not reveal your identity if this is what you request.

You can find our policies regarding safeguarding for adults and for children on the BCHA website. On our website we also have contact details available if you would like to report or make us aware of a safeguarding concern.



We work in partnership with Victim Support to provide support to customers affected by anti-social behaviour. Please contact your Tenancy Officer for ways we can support you.

Important Tenancy Information

Floor Coverings

We will not give permission for the installation of laminate flooring in flats or other types of property where this may cause a nuisance to neighbours.



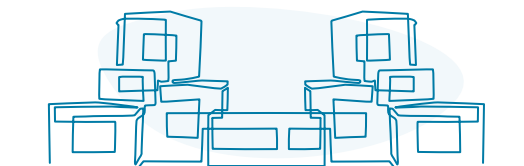
Contents Insurance

We will insure the structure of your home. If you live in a property that has shared areas or furniture and laundry equipment that we are responsible for, we will also insure them.

We will not insure your personal possessions. You are advised to take out your own insurance to cover your personal possessions.

Item Storage

Customers should not store any belongings in the loft space as access may be required for repairs.



Mobility Scooters



If you have a mobility scooter you must make your own arrangements to store and charge it. Our clear corridors policy means that you must not store them in communal areas such as landings, lifts, foyers, stairwells, walkways and community rooms. You must not run extension leads into corridors to charge them.

If you live in a flat and are considering obtaining a mobility scooter, please contact the Tenancy team beforehand to apply for permission and discuss what options may be available for storing and charging your mobility scooter.

Gardens & Rubbish in Gardens



You must keep any garden forming part of your home in a tidy and reasonable condition and free of rubbish. This includes cutting the grass and trimming the hedges. If we have to tidy or maintain your garden for you or clear any rubbish, we will charge you with the cost of this work.

Do not use the garden or any other external areas to store rubbish, scrap metal or vehicle parts (including tyres).

Apart from routine trimmings and pruning, you must not remove, alter or replace any hedge, fence, wall or tree at your home without first getting our permission in writing.

The actual boundary of your property should be marked by post and wire fencing and you are not permitted to encroach on to the land beyond this.

Sheds, Outbuildings & Fences



You must not put up a shed, garage, conservatory, greenhouse or fencing without first getting our permission in writing.



Home Improvements & Alterations

You are responsible for repairing and maintaining all improvements, fixtures, and fittings that you install in your home. If you leave them behind at the end of your tenancy they will become our property. If you take them with you, you must put back your home to the way it was before you made the improvements. If not, we will charge you the reasonable cost of any reinstatement work.

You have the right to carry out any alterations or improvements to your home, including the installation of a gas cooker, heater, or other gas appliance, provided you get our written permission before making any alterations or improvements to your home.

You may need to meet certain conditions, such as making sure gas appliances are installed in line with gas safety regulations, building regulations and planning approval. Depending on the type of improvement, you may also be asked to agree to return your home to its original condition at the end of your tenancy. We are entitled to refuse consent if you are in arrears with your rent or otherwise in breach with the terms of your tenancy agreement.



Pets

You must get our prior written permission to keep a cat or a dog. We may make an exception in the case of an assistance dog. You may keep other small pets, for example, a small, caged animal, bird or tank of fish at your home without getting our permission.

You do need to get our prior written permission if you intend to set up an aviary or pigeon loft. You may not keep any other animal without getting our prior written permission. You are not to keep any animals for breeding purposes.



You must not allow any animal you keep at your home or that your visitors bring with them to cause a nuisance to anyone in the local area including our staff or agency contractors. You must not keep any animal that is unsuitable for your home or that is classed by the law as dangerous.

If you keep any animal or pet at your home that causes a nuisance, fouls or otherwise damages your home or any shared areas, we may withdraw our permission, and the animal or pet must be removed from your home. If the animal or pet remains at your home after we have withdrawn our permission, this will be a breach of your tenancy agreement.

Running a Business

You must not run a business from your home without our prior written permission. We will not unreasonably refuse permission unless we feel that the business is likely to cause a nuisance to other people or damage your home. If, after we have given permission, the business does in our reasonable opinion cause a nuisance we can give you notice withdrawing our permission.

Television Aerials, Satellite Dishes & CCTV

You must not fit a satellite dish, CCTV, television, or radio aerial or make any other alteration or improvement to your home without our prior written permission. Permission for the erection of satellite dishes or CCTV on flats will only be considered where the proposal is for the installation of communal systems.

Aids & Adaptations

We can help make certain adaptations to your home so you can continue to live there. For more information, please speak to your Tenancy Officer.

Your Neighbourhood

BCHA are committed to upholding rigorous safety and quality standards for homes and communal areas to ensure the well-being and satisfaction of residents. This includes compliance with building codes and regulations, regular maintenance and inspections, and adherence to health and safety protocols, such as fire safety measures and accessibility standards. We also prioritise the use of quality materials and sustainable practices in design and construction, fostering a safe, clean, and welcoming environment.



Cleaning



We are responsible for monitoring cleanliness of communal areas in all blocks of flats including general needs flats, sheltered schemes and temporary accommodation.

Managing Communal Areas



BCHA is responsible for ensuring that communal areas for buildings that we own or lease are well-maintained for the safety and enjoyment of all residents. This includes regular cleaning, completion of repairs, and planned programmed work for the maintenance and upkeep of communal decoration. We encourage all residents to report any issues they observe, as we believe that maintaining these shared spaces is a collective responsibility.



Communal areas of flats should always be kept clear of any rubbish and personal belongings to ensure staff and contractors are able to work in these areas unhindered.

Items such as bicycles, pushchairs, wheelchairs, mobility scooters, electrical appliances, rubbish bags, furniture, pictures and children's toys should all be stored inside your flat to comply with your responsibilities under the Tenancy Agreement.

Fire Safety



Minimising the risk of fire within your home and in communal areas is everyone's responsibility. Tenancy Officers regularly inspect communal areas in blocks of flats to identify and deal with anything that may be a fire risk. BCHA carries out regular Fire Risk Assessments in blocks of flats to assess whether communal areas meet the requirements of Fire Safety law. Customers and leaseholders also have responsibilities to take steps to ensure the risk of fire is minimised, but you also need to know what to do in the event of a fire.

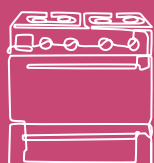
Communal areas of flats should always be kept clear of rubbish and personal belongings as they are important escape routes. These need to be kept clear in case of emergency. There are some measures you can take within your home to stay safe. You should have at least one smoke detector in your home, and test this once a week. Report any faulty smoke detectors to BCHA.

BCHA's Kitchen Fire Safety Tips

Don't leave cooking unattended.



Keep electrical leads, tea towels and cloths away from the oven and hob.



Make sure you switch off the oven or hob when you have finished cooking.



Spark devices are safer than matches or lighters to light gas cookers.



Take care when wearing loose clothing; it can easily catch fire.



Using Candles in your Home

- ☉ Place them on heat-resistant surfaces; tea lights can melt plastic such as TVs and baths.
- ☉ Place them away from materials that could catch fire such as curtains, clothing, furniture and hair.
- ☉ Keep out of reach of pets and children.
- ☉ Never leave candles or tea lights unattended; always extinguish them when leaving the room or going to bed.

In general:

- ☉ Make sure all equipment and appliances are in good working order. Make sure second-hand electrical appliances are tested for electrical safety before you use them.
- ☉ Do not overload electric sockets.
- ☉ Electrical extension leads should be kept to a minimum. Ensure you do not overload the extension lead by exceeding the stated maximum current. Unplug electrical equipment that is not being used.
- ☉ Always guard open or radiant fires.



- Ⓢ Do not use Liquid Propane Gas or paraffin heaters in flats or maisonettes. These can easily be knocked over and start a fire.
- Ⓢ Do not store gas cylinders or paraffin inside your home.
- Ⓢ Never throw water on an electrical appliance or burning oil for example a chip pan fire.
- Ⓢ Avoid storing flammable material that could be a fire risk.
- Ⓢ Don't allow rubbish to accumulate anywhere in or around your home including communal areas and gardens.
- Ⓢ Keep communal landings, corridors and stairwells clear of items at all times so your exit route is not obstructed in the event of an emergency. Ensure doorways and corridors within your home are kept clear so your escape route is not obstructed.
- Ⓢ Don't prop open fire doors; when closed these will prevent spread of fire. Close doors at night within your home - this will help to stop fire spreading.

Barbecues and Patio Heaters



You must take care when using barbecues and patio heaters for your own safety. Do not place them near your property, any outbuildings, fences or plants and shrubs, to prevent a fire from starting or spreading. If you live in a flat with a balcony a barbecue and patio heater is prohibited.

Plan your escape route out of your home. Don't wait until an emergency arises.

How to Raise Concerns

If you have a concern about fire safety in your block, please contact us by informing your Tenancy Officer or calling our Customer Service Team.

Communal Gardens

Many of our flats have gardens which are shared for all residents to enjoy. BCHA's appointed contractor will maintain the grounds on a scheduled basis.



Security



If you have a door entry system on your block of flats, please ensure the door is always closed securely and not propped open so as not to compromise security for everyone living in the block. Do not let anyone who you do not know into the building or jam open any communal or fire safety doors.

Smoking

You must not smoke in covered shared areas or remove “no smoking” signs from those areas, common parts or doors.

Grounds Maintenance



We have an appointed contractor for maintaining the grounds on our housing estates and the gardens at all our blocks of flats. The contractor regularly mows the grass, cuts back hedges and maintains shrubs and flower beds. Paths, drying areas and garages are also sprayed regularly to control weeds and moss.

Rubbish Disposal



If you live in a block of flats with communal (shared) bins you should place your rubbish bags inside the large collection bins. Do not leave them near the bins or on communal landings and walkways or in the gardens. Only rubbish placed in the bins will be collected. Rubbish bags left beside bins or outside can attract dogs, cats, rats and other pests which in turn create a health risk.

Local authorities operate a scheduled bin collection service for household waste and recyclables including garden waste and glass. Please ensure you use these correctly and recycle your waste where you can. There are stickers on the bins to advise you what can and cannot be recycled.

Bonfires

Bonfires can cause a nuisance and local authorities have the power under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to act against those responsible for causing a nuisance. Smoke from bonfires can be very irritating and can cause distress to those exposed to it.



Parking and Disabled Parking Bays

You must not park without a valid permit either for residents or their visitors, where there is parking scheme in operation.

You must not sell, rent, or give away a parking space or garage which we provide for you.

You must not park in a disabled parking bay unless you hold a current, valid blue badge. Where a proper place for parking is not provided, you must find your own on street parking, if parking is available and subject to any parking restrictions.

Vehicles

You, your family, friends, or anyone else living with you or visitors to your home must not do any of the following:

Park a vehicle anywhere on your home unless it has a garage, parking space or driveway with hard standing and a drop kerb.

You must not park any unroadworthy or untaxed vehicle on any land owned by us or on the road outside your home- untaxed vehicles must have a valid statutory off-road notice (SORN). Vehicles with SORN declarations may not be parked in shared car parks or on shared land we own unless you obtain our prior written permission.

You must not park caravans, motorhomes, camper vans, trailers, boats, or any business vehicle at your home, on any road outside your home or on any land owned by us.

Carry out vehicle repairs except routine servicing to a vehicle belonging to you or a person living with you. Where we believe that you may be receiving payment for repairs, you must if we ask you prove that the vehicle belongs to you.

Estate Improvement

We want you to Love Where You Live and would encourage you to think about how we could improve the area where you live. Improvements can include:



Improving communal garden space



Installation of a door entry system



Improved lighting



Adding additional parking

Moving Home

Giving Notice



You need to give us four weeks' written notice to end your tenancy. You can give notice on any day (Monday to Sunday). The notice period will only start from the Monday after we receive your notice. Notices can be emailed to your Tenancy Officer or to customerservices@bcha.org.uk

Alternatively, your notice can be written and addressed to Customer Services at: The Factory, 14 Alder Hills, Poole, Dorset, BH12 4AS

You must continue to pay your rent and all other charges during your notice period and your rent account must be clear when the tenancy ends.

We will write to you confirming we have received your notice. We will advise you of the date your tenancy will end and when and where you should return the keys.



If insufficient notice is given, then a Notice to Quit may be served on the property in order for us to end the tenancy.

During the notice period we will need to visit and inspect the property. It will be determined by us whether any non-standard items can remain in the property.

You must ensure that we are given vacant possession of the property on the termination date.

Joint Tenancy

Where the tenancy is a joint tenancy, one customer can terminate the tenancy on behalf of both customers.

Condition of the Property When Handing Back

When you move out you should leave the property and its fixtures and fittings in the same state as they were at the start of the tenancy. Fair wear and tear is expected, as stated in your tenancy conditions. The property should be left clean and tidy and in reasonable decorative order. The garden should also be tidy and clear of rubbish.

You may be charged for clearing furniture, carpets, rubbish and other items left in the property, shed, garage or garden.

If you are on the transfer list, you will normally have to carry out any necessary repairs before we offer you alternative accommodation.

You may also be charged for repairs needed due to wilful damage or neglect to the property and any fixtures or fittings. You may also be charged for removing any alterations and adaptations unless we have previously granted permission for them to retain.

Please contact the Tenancy team during the notice period if you are in any doubt.



Paying Rent

Rent and charges are due each and every week of the year. You must pay your rent and charges weekly in advance in accordance with your tenancy conditions.

Your rent and charges may include:

- Ⓢ Core rent
- Ⓢ Service charge - for services provided to maintain communal areas of blocks of flats including cleaning, lighting, care-taking, door entry systems and services to customers living in sheltered housing, including the alarm monitoring service.
- Ⓢ Heating charge (in some properties)
- Ⓢ Water/sewerage charge



Ways to Pay Your Rent

We prefer you to pay your rent by Direct Debit and offer a variety of collection dates for your convenience.

To pay by Direct Debit you will need a bank or building society current account. You can set one up straight away by calling the Customer Service Team on 01202 410500 and requesting to speak to someone in Income. We collect Direct Debit payments monthly, weekly, fortnightly or 4 weekly on any date of your choice. Rent should be paid in advance.

We will write to you before your Direct Debit starts to confirm the arrangements. We will give you ten days' written notice if your Direct Debit charges change and will amend your direct debit accordingly.

The Direct Debit offers guarantees which gives you protection and ensures you are in control of your money.

The mandate contains a Direct Debit guarantee which gives you protection and ensures you are in control of your money.

You must continue to pay your rent and all other charges during your notice period and your rent account must be clear when the tenancy ends.

Benefits of Paying by Direct Debit

No worries about remembering to pay at the right time.

We re-calculate your payments for rent and charges at the start of each financial year.

Your bank or building society does all the work and you stay in control.

You can cancel the arrangement at any time.

Saves you time.

An immediate money-back guarantee from the bank if an error is made.

Telephone Payments

You can telephone us on 01202 410 500 to pay and will be guided through the payment process. You will need your tenancy reference number and debit card details. We do not accept credit cards.

Deduction from Benefits

If you are in receipt of a means-tested benefit from the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) and you have rent arrears, you may be able to request that deductions are made from your benefits which are paid direct to your rent account. Please contact the Income team or Financial Inclusion Team for further information.

You should tell the Income team if you have made a claim for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit so we can take this into account should we be considering taking any action against you to recover rent arrears.

Claiming Benefits

You may qualify for help towards your rent if you receive state benefits or have a low income. Your entitlement will depend on your personal circumstances.

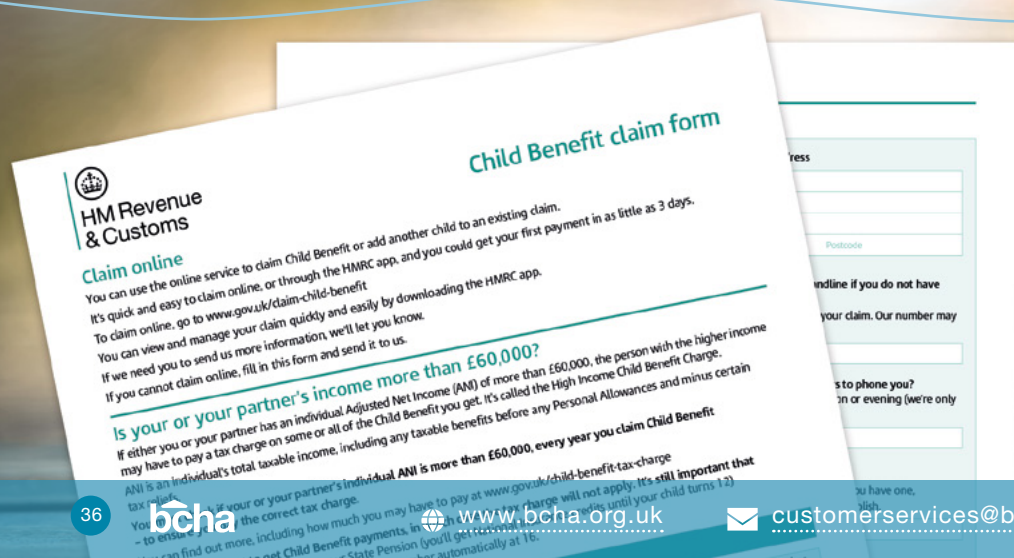
Full details of rent and service charges can be requested by email, post or over the phone.

The rent for each new financial year will be effective from the first Monday in April and we will provide 28 days' written notice of any changes to your rent and service/support charges where applicable.

If you are of working age and making a new claim for help to pay your rent, you will need to claim Universal Credit. For more information and to make a claim visit the Gov website and search for 'Universal Credit'.

If you need help completing an application form please contact Universal Credit, the Income team or the Financial Inclusion Team.

You will need to provide supporting information with your claim. You can speed up this assessment by providing the information quickly. You should also submit a claim for Universal Credit or Housing Benefit promptly as any delay will result in you losing money.



Universal Credit

Universal Credit has replaced the following benefits, now known as legacy benefits:

- ☎ Income based Jobseeker's Allowance
- ☎ Housing Benefit
- ☎ Working Tax Credit
- ☎ Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- ☎ Income Support
- ☎ Child Tax Credit



If you claim Universal Credit, then any housing related payments are paid directly to you monthly in arrears. It is your responsibility to make your full rental payments and to ensure that you pay in advance.

You can set up a payment plan to reduce any arrears so that you can move towards paying in advance. You may find it easier to set up a direct debit to make your rent payments on the day that you receive your Universal Credit payment.

Direct debits can be collected on any date of the month. You can also set up a standing order with your bank on any day that you wish or as often as you want.

If you have rent arrears, then the Income team or Financial Inclusion team may apply to Universal Credit to obtain a payment direct from your claim so that your rent is paid first.

This can result in 20% of your overall entitlement being sent direct to your rent account to pay your rent arrears. This can be a lot of money, so it is best to discuss affordable rent arrears repayment plans with the Income team.

Problems Paying Your Rent

We understand people can have money problems so if you have difficulty paying your rent you should contact the Income team immediately.

Rent arrears can become a serious issue if help is not sought out early enough. We can work out a payment plan with you for an agreed regular amount. If you follow this agreement, we will take no further action. We can also advise you of benefits to which you may be entitled.

You can also get independent assistance with debt counselling from the Citizens Advice (CA). The CA advisor offers a full debt service giving advice on how to manage your debts effectively. They complete a statement of your financial situation including your income and outgoings and use this information to work out what you can afford to pay on a regular basis towards your debts. They may also be able to support you in negotiating with your creditors what you are able to pay. The CA will also undertake a benefit check with you to ensure that you are receiving all the benefits to which you are entitled.

In all cases you should make a realistic agreement to make regular, affordable payments to clear your rent arrears and reduce your debt.

We recognise that there are more difficult times of the year where rent payments are a challenge, for example school summer holidays and Christmas. Not paying rent during these times is unacceptable and paying the rental charge is a priority above birthdays, Christmas, and the need to purchase school uniforms. To avoid future problems with rent payments you may wish to overpay each week or month to take a break from paying on a set period. For more information contact the Income team.



Action for Rent Arrears

We will take action against you for rent arrears in line with our policy which may result in you losing your home if you do not get in touch with us or you fail to pay as agreed. We will contact you about your rent arrears, but if you fail to pay we will take the following action outlined below.

Notice Seeking Possession

We will serve you with a Notice Seeking Possession (or a Notice Requiring Possession if you have an introductory tenancy). This is the beginning of a legal process to repossess your home and to obtain a County Court Judgement to recover the debt.

Possession Proceedings

We will start court proceedings if you still have arrears on your rent account at the end of the four weeks' Notice period or you are not reducing your arrears by making regular payments. You will be liable for our legal costs.

You will be notified of your court date, and we advise you to attend the hearing. We may ask the court to suspend a possession order if you agree to pay a set amount each week to reduce the arrears. We will apply to the court for a date to take possession of your home if you do not keep to the terms of the court order.

Eviction Proceedings

We will apply to the court for a warrant to evict you from your home if you still have arrears on your account after the date fixed by the court. If we obtain a warrant, we may consider not evicting you from your home if you pay all outstanding rent arrears and court costs. Any payments made at this stage must be by cash or banker's draft. We will continue to recover any arrears owed by you if you have been evicted from your home.

Repairs and Maintenance in Your Home

The following pages will provide all the information you need to know about repairs to your home, including:

- Information about our repairs and maintenance service
- How to report a repair
- How quickly your repair will be completed.
- What's our responsibility and what's yours
- Information about the equipment in your home



How to Report a Repair

If we are responsible for carrying out a repair, you need to let us know that there is a problem as soon as possible, to avoid it getting any worse. You can report a repair on either of the following ways:

- By calling our Customer Service Team on **01202 410 500**
- By emailing us at repairs@bcha.org.uk

If your repair is an emergency outside of core hours (Monday - Friday, 8am - 5pm), you must report it by calling the same number (**01202 410 500**).

Please note, text messages and emails are only dealt with during office hours, Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm.

Once you have reported the repair, we will arrange for a member of the Repairs Team to attend your home. Please do not arrange for your own contractors to do any repairs without contacting us to try and resolve the problem first.

STEP 1

Before Reporting the Repair

Please check the information in the following pages to see whether the repair is your responsibility or ours. If the repair is our responsibility, please let us know what the problem is and where it is.

STEP 2

What Do We Need to Know?

- Your name, address and a contact number
- Details about the repair
- If the repair relates to a washing machine, fridge or an oven, it would be useful to let us know the make and model if you have the information available to you.

STEP 3

Your Appointment

- 🕒 The appointment slots we can offer you are Monday to Friday: an am appointment (8am to 12 noon), a pm appointment (12 noon to 5pm) a non school run appointment (10am to 2pm) or a first appointment. Please let us know what you would prefer.
- 🕒 We sometimes use subcontractors to complete your repair work to ensure you get a timely and efficient service. We'll let you know if a subcontractor is set to visit you.

BCHA's commitment: We will send a text confirmation of your appointment and we will also send a reminder text the day before your appointment.

STEP 4

On the Day

If you are not able to stay at home during the day of your appointment, please arrange for someone to be there, such as a friend or relative who is over the age of 18. If you are unable to organise this, please let us know.

If we come to do the repair and you are out, a card will be left asking you to arrange another appointment. If we do not hear from you, we will assume that the repair is no longer required.

All BCHA Home operatives and subcontractors have ID cards. Please ask to see these before letting anyone into your home.

STEP 5

Repair Complete

Once your repair has been completed, an independent company may call you to see whether you are happy with the service you received.

BCHA's Promise to You



Treat you and your home with respect



Leave your home clean and tidy after your repair



Aim to fix the repairs first time around



Keep in touch with you as required about your repair

How Quickly Repairs are Completed

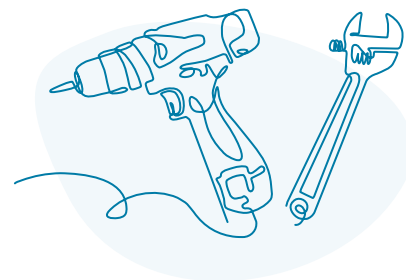
When you call to report your repair, we will ask you a few questions, to determine the urgency of your repair and the timeframe in which it will be

completed. We have three categories of repairs: Emergency, Urgent or Routine.

Emergency Repairs - 24 Hours

If your repair problem is likely to cause harm to you or damage to your home, we will treat your repair as an emergency.

Emergency Repairs Include:



- ⌚ Burst or frozen water pipes.
- ⌚ Loss of water – please check with your supplier.
- ⌚ Loss of electric – Contact National Grid as 1st port of call to ascertain a power cut (Call **105**).
- ⌚ Loss of gas/gas leaks – please call our main line which out of hours will divert to a dedicated out of hours office team on **01202 410 500**.
- ⌚ Serious electrical faults such as no light or power - please check with your supplier before calling us.
- ⌚ If you are locked out or have lost your keys (you may be charged for this).
- ⌚ The collapse of external or internal structural parts of the building.
- ⌚ Faulty external doors and windows which mean the property is insecure.
- ⌚ Blocked drains or toilet (when there is no other toilet available).
- ⌚ No heating or hot water.
- ⌚ Serious leaking from the roof.



Urgent Repairs - 5 Days

We will schedule an urgent repair within 5 working days of you notifying us. Urgent Repairs Include:

- ⌚ Failure of an individual light in the communal areas.
- ⌚ Minor electrical faults (which are significant but not life threatening) e.g. single socket/light not working.
- ⌚ Minor plumbing faults, including leaks from the waste pipes of the toilet, sink and bath.
- ⌚ Heating failure (which is significant but will not affect your health). Blocked sinks.
- ⌚ Glazing- where there is no risk to your security.
- ⌚ Minor roof leaks.
- ⌚ The toilet is not flushing.
- ⌚ Loose sanitary fittings to bath, sinks and toilet pans.
- ⌚ Extractor fan problems.
- ⌚ Faults with hard wired electrical doorbell or entry phone.



Routine Repairs - 21 Days

Routine repairs will usually be completed within 21 working days of you reporting them.

Routine Repairs Include:

- ⌚ Damage to property.
- ⌚ Plastering repairs.
- ⌚ Broken seals around baths, basins and sinks (except where causing significant damage).
- ⌚ Damage to window seals, handles, locks etc (where there is no risk to safety).
- ⌚ Carpentry repairs to rotten timber, such as floors, skirting, door linings, doors.
- ⌚ Ceramic tiling.
- ⌚ Kitchen unit repairs.
- ⌚ Fences, gates, and boundary wall repairs.
- ⌚ Repairing and cleaning out gutters and downpipes.
- ⌚ Damp and mould.



Post Inspections

Following the completion of a repair, you may be contacted by a member of our team about a post inspection.

These inspections are undertaken to ensure that your repair has been carried out to the required standard, offering value for money and to ensure that we have correctly followed our procedures.

What is BCHA's Responsibility?

If we are responsible for carrying out a repair, you need to let us know about it as soon as possible, to avoid the problem getting worse. If the repair is within a communal area, please do not assume that someone else has contacted us.

BCHA's Responsibility

We're Responsible for Keeping your Home in Good Order

- 🔧 The structure of your home: roof, walls, floors, ceilings, doors, windows, drains, rainwater, and soil pipes, paths, stairs, and fences.
- 🔧 Installations and services: toilets, baths, showers, sinks, electric, gas and water pipes, water heaters, central heating gas fires, smoke alarms and TV aerials.
- 🔧 Furniture, cookers, fridges etc: only if we provide these as part of your tenancy. If we do, these will be listed on the inventory you signed when you moved in.
- 🔧 Flooring in the kitchen and bathroom.

Shared Responsibility

Things Which are a Shared Responsibility:

- 🔧 We are responsible for keeping shared areas in good repair, such as entrances, corridors, stairways, and bin stores. This includes heating, lighting, door entry, security, and fire alarm systems in this area.
- 🔧 You are responsible for keeping shared areas clean and tidy, and free from rubbish or obstructions.

Annual Servicing

Every year we require access to your home to carry out safety checks, which will include servicing your gas boiler and mains fitted smoke detectors to make sure they are in good working order and electrical safety checks when required.

It is essential that you allow us access to your property to do this work, which is for the safety of you and your family. All gas servicing is carried out by a Gas safe registered operative.

What is Your Responsibility?

It is your responsibility to take good care of your home and garden. You are responsible for:

- ⌚ Keeping your home and garden clean and tidy.
- ⌚ Clearing blocked sinks, basins, and toilets. Check to see if you can clear anything obvious, if you can't please call us. You may be charged for this.
- ⌚ Filling small cracks in with plaster.
- ⌚ The internal decoration.
- ⌚ Adjusting or replacing doors when you fit or remove carpets.
- ⌚ Putting up curtain rails and re-fixing draught excluders.
- ⌚ Repairing or replacing electric plugs, fuses, light bulbs, florescent tubes and doorbells.
- ⌚ Replacing lost keys.
- ⌚ Re-fixing toilet seats, bathroom cabinets, towel rails, toilet roll holders and mirrors.
- ⌚ Installation of your own washing machine, dishwasher, and safety fit gas cookers by a competent installer.
- ⌚ Providing and fitting shower rails and curtains.
- ⌚ Replacing plugs in sinks and baths.
- ⌚ Wiping away mould caused by condensation.
- ⌚ Looking after and replacing your washing lines and rotary driers. Reporting to us any pest and wildlife infestations, like wasps, mice and birds.
- ⌚ Repairing shelving, coat, and hat rails.
- ⌚ Keeping taps and showers free from limescale.
- ⌚ Repairing internal doors.
- ⌚ Ensuring that someone over the age of 18 is at home when you have a repair appointment.

DIY in Your Home

You will need our permission in writing before carrying out any repairs or improvements yourself. If you are unsure about your tenancy or responsibilities, please speak to your Tenancy Officer for advice.



Vandalism and Neglect

You are responsible for repairs caused as a result of damage or neglect by you, your family, your visitors, or your pets, including any accidental damage or any alterations you have made.

Please be aware that you will be charged for the full cost of any repair work which we have to carry out as a result of damages caused by yourself.

If damage has been caused to your home by criminal action you must report this to the police, so as they can investigate the matter. The police will then give you a crime number which you must tell us, so as we can carry out the repairs needed.

Condensation in Your Home

Did you know...

Condensation effects up to 1 in 5 households in the UK, which can lead to black mould and cause serious health issues.



What is Condensation?

Condensation is moisture caused by everyday living and occurs when warm moist air comes in to contact with cooler air, or a cold surface.

When moisture vapour from condensation builds up over a period of time within your home, you may begin to see damage to walls, fabrics, floors and ceilings from this condensation. Mould may also appear as a result.

If you can control condensation, then you can reduce the risk of mould growth in your home.

What Causes Condensation?



Too much moisture in the air

Activities we do within the home create moisture in the air. Washing and drying clothes can create 2-12 pints, cooking can produce between 3-7 pints and bathing can produce 1-2 pints.



Too little heat

It is recommended that you always keep your home at a minimum temperature of 19°C to reduce the cooling of moisture.



Too little ventilation

Little or no ventilation will prevent the damp air inside your home being replaced by the dry air outside.

How to Prevent Condensation

STEP 1

Produce less moisture

The more moisture there is in the air, the more likely it is your home will get condensation. You need to try and produce as little moisture as you can.

- ⌚ Avoid drying your clothes indoors on radiators and clothes racks. If you have to dry clothes indoors, put them in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or extractor fan on.
- ⌚ When cooking, cover saucepans with lids and keep the kitchen door closed.
- ⌚ After activities such as washing and cooking, make sure a window is open or that the extractor fan is on.
- ⌚ If you have a tumble dryer, make sure this is vented to the outside.
- ⌚ Avoid paraffin and gas heaters, as these create extra condensation.
- ⌚ Do not run your shower for longer than you need to.
- ⌚ Mop up any condensation or excess water that has formed each day, for example, on the windows.

STEP 2

Remove moisture

Ventilation is vital to a healthy home. It is important to allow plenty of fresh air into your home, as otherwise the indoor air will become stale and humid, leading to unhealthy conditions.

- ⌚ If you get the opportunity, open windows throughout your home each day.
- ⌚ If you can, keep your vents on the windows open at all times.
- ⌚ After you have had a bath or shower open the bathroom window or leave the extractor fan on until the steam has cleared, leaving the door shut.
- ⌚ Ensure you leave the extractor fan on for 20 minutes after the activity, to ensure most of the moisture is removed from the air.

STEP 3

Keep your home warm

It is important to maintain a temperature of above 19°C throughout your home, to ensure mould spores do not start to grow.

- ⌚ Heat all rooms, even if they are not being used.
- ⌚ Do not place any furniture or belongings in front of radiators, as this will stop them from heating the room efficiently.
- ⌚ Do not use portable LPG (Calor Gas) heaters. These are prohibited for use in our properties for health and safety reasons.

- ⌚ Do not use your heating on a high setting for short periods of time, maintain a lower temperature over a longer period. This will keep your home warmer and doesn't necessarily cost more.
- ⌚ If your radiators have thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs), these will give you greater control to regulate the temperature in each room.
- ⌚ If you have central heating, use the thermostat to control the heating by setting the temperature to a comfortable level. The recommended temperature is 19°C in your hallway, and 21°C in your living room.

STEP 4

Managing mould

If mould has formed within your home as a result of condensation, it is important that you treat the affected areas immediately.

- ⌚ Apply a product recommended for mould to the affected areas. Products such as anti-fungal spray are available from supermarkets and hardware shops, ensure you follow the instructions carefully. Do not use bleach.
- ⌚ Wipe down the inside of your windows if they become wet with condensation and wring out the cloth rather than drying it on the radiator.
- ⌚ Try not to place furniture against outside walls, as mould is more likely to grow where no dry air has been able to circulate.
- ⌚ When redecorating your bathroom or kitchen, use anti-mould paints specially formulated for these areas.

If you experience any problems with your heating system or extractor fans, call us on **01202 410 500**.

Remember both BCHA as the landlord, and you as the customer, are responsible for keeping condensation within your home under control. If you follow the above advice but the mould and condensation persist after 28 days, please contact your Tenancy Officer on **01202 410 500** for further help.

For more advice on preventing and treating mould in your home, please visit: www.bcha.org.uk/home



Security

If you have a door entry system on your block of flats, please ensure the door is always closed securely and not propped open so as not to compromise security for everyone living in the block.



Health and Safety

BCHA has a fundamental obligation to comply with health and safety (H&S) legislation to ensure the well-being of our customers, staff, and the wider community. This commitment encompasses the proactive identification and management of potential hazards, the implementation of safe practices in housing management, maintenance, and development, and the continuous monitoring and improvement of safety standards. By adhering to health and safety legislation, BCHA not only fulfils our legal responsibilities, but also promote a culture of safety, transparency, and trust, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for all our customers.

Electrical Safety

We aim to carry out electrical checks in our properties approximately every five years by specially trained inspecting electricians. Electrical engineers will call at properties and carry out a test to check the safety of things like electrical wiring, lights, and sockets.

- ⌚ Do let us have access to your house to test the electrical installation. Use appliances according to their user instructions.
- ⌚ Don't do your own DIY repairs on appliances or sockets.
- ⌚ Don't plug too many appliances into one socket.
- ⌚ Unplug electrical things like hairdryers when you are not using them. Don't ignore worn flex on appliances.
- ⌚ Use only good quality plugs.

Do allow us access to service your gas appliance every year, in accordance with the law and your tenancy agreement but also to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

If you suspect a gas leak, follow these actions:

1. Do not smoke or light matches
2. Do not turn electrical switches on or off
3. Extinguish all open flames
4. Open doors and windows to ventilate the property
5. Turn off the gas using the Emergency Control Valve (ECV) typically located to the left-hand side of the gas meter.
6. Ensure access will be available to the property for an engineer to call.
7. Call us on **01202 410500** to report the issue.

We will then call the National Gas Emergency Service, you will then be advised that an engineer from the National Gas Emergency Service will call within the time specified to locate the possible gas escape, and that they will need to allow access for the safety check to be completed. If the gas escape is found to be after the gas meter, the gas installation will be made safe by isolating the gas supply. If the gas escape is on the gas meter installation, this will be repaired by the First Call Operative from the National Gas Emergency Service.

Suspected Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide poisoning can be fatal, but many people are not aware of the warning signs, particularly older people, who may have flu-like symptoms or simply feeling drowsy down to old age.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include:

- 🌀 Nausea
- 🌀 Light-headedness
- 🌀 Headaches
- 🌀 Shortness of breath
- 🌀 Dizziness
- 🌀 Sleepiness



If you have been hospitalised due to suspected carbon monoxide poisoning (taken to hospital in an ambulance), or have confirmed carboxyhemoglobin (COHb) levels in your blood, then you must take the following action:

- ⌚ Stop using all appliances and switch them off.
- ⌚ Open doors and windows to ventilate the property.
- ⌚ Evacuate the property immediately.
- ⌚ If possible and safe, turn off the gas using the Emergency Control Valve (ECV) typically located to the left-hand side of the gas meter.
- ⌚ Call us on **01202 410500** to report the issue.

We will then call the National Gas Emergency Service. You will then be advised that an engineer from the National Gas Emergency Service will call within the time specified to locate the possible gas escape, and that they will need to allow access for the safety check to be completed. If the gas escape is found to be after the gas meter, the gas installation will be made safe by isolating the gas supply. If the gas escape is on the gas meter installation, this will be repaired by the First Call Operative from the National Gas Emergency Services.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms and Reporting

If a call is received from a customer because their carbon monoxide alarm sounds, or they suspect a carbon monoxide leak from a smell of fumes, they must be advised of the following:

- ⌚ Stop using all appliances and switch them off.
- ⌚ Open doors and windows to ventilate the property.
- ⌚ Evacuate the property immediately.
- ⌚ If possible and safe, turn off the gas using the Emergency Control Valve (ECV) typically located to the left-hand side of the gas meter. Don't go back into the property.
- ⌚ If feeling unwell, seek immediate medical help.
- ⌚ Call us on **01202 410500** to report the issue.

We will then call the National Gas Emergency Service, you will then be advised that an engineer from the National Gas Emergency Service will call within the time specified to locate the possible gas escape, and that they will need to allow access for the safety check to be completed. If the gas escape is found to be after the gas meter, the gas installation will be made safe by isolating the gas supply. If the gas escape is on the gas meter installation, this will be repaired by the First Call Operative from the National Gas Emergency Service.



Homes Fit For Habitation



You have the right to a home that is safe, sanitary, and fit for human habitation. This includes essential maintenance of structural elements, plumbing, heating, and electrical systems. BCHA is legally obliged to ensure that rental properties meet these basic living standards. If you have recently reported concerns to us and we have failed to remedy the problems reported in a timely way and without explanation, please make a complaint to our Customer Services team. If this does not resolve matters, you can take legal action against us to enforce your tenancy agreement. For more information about your legal rights you can contact the Housing Advice Service or a solicitor.

Asbestos



If your home was built before 2000, it might have asbestos in it. Materials containing asbestos aren't dangerous if they are sealed, in good condition and are left alone. But if you want to carry out DIY, like drilling boards to fix shelves or removing bath panels and you're not sure whether they've got asbestos in them, call us for advice.

If you think there is asbestos in your home, our asbestos surveyor can take a look and take a sample, if asbestos is in your home but it is in good condition and not damaged, it's safer to leave it where it is. We will keep an eye on it and then remove it when we do planned work on your home. If our surveyor says the asbestos must be removed a specialist company will do it without any risk to you or your family.



Legionella

Legionella bacteria are found naturally in water sources and they can multiply in domestic systems given the right conditions of temperature and nutrients. Inhalation or ingestion of legionella bacteria can cause a form of pneumonia called Legionnaires' disease, as well as other less serious illnesses. BCHA will carry out risk assessments to its housing stock in line with health and safety executive recommendations. The risk in domestic properties is very small given the relatively small size of most domestic water systems.



To avoid the risk of bacteria forming we advise:

- ⌚ As legionella bacteria survives best in temperatures of 20-45 degrees Celsius, it starts to die if heated to above 50 degrees Celsius. Therefore, we recommend that if you have a hot water cylinder, turn up the cylinder thermostat to ensure that it is above 60 degrees Celsius.
- ⌚ Shower heads and hoses should be dismantled and descaled with a domestic descaler every 3 months, or when the shower rose shows signs of blockage.
- ⌚ If not used more than once per week, you should flush the toilet and flush through the shower hose, basin, bath and sink taps by running the water for 1 minute before use.

Making Your Voice Heard and Getting Involved

As a customer of BCHA, you play a crucial role in shaping and overseeing the services you receive from us. Your involvement is highly valued.

Ways for You to Engage



Attend one of our in person groups.



Join a meeting remotely through virtual engagement.



Share your views via email in a 1:1 setting with your tenancy officer or project worker.



Participate in one of our phone or digital surveys.

Under Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 (Provision of Information and Consultation), you have a legal right to be consulted on housing management issues. This section explains how you can participate and provide feedback on our services and any proposed changes that may impact you and to have your voice heard by BCHA.

Staying involved can also allow you:

- 🕒 To know how your landlord is performing.
- 🕒 To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.
- 🕒 To be treated with respect.

Ways to Get Involved



Customer Steering Group

This group consists of customers from various services who represent the views of customers to BCHA and encourage positive change. The group ensures that insights from embedded engagement, service meetings, and reference panels (focus groups) described below are communicated to the executive team and the board to influence BCHA's service delivery. We meet four times a year—twice with the board and executive team, and twice together, where we invite the board and exec to join us.



In these meetings, we discuss issues of concern related to service delivery, highlight good practices, and lobby for change. The group also formally communicates back to reference panels and service groups any issues the board and exec have raised.

Reference Panels

Reference Panels meet regularly to discuss issues raised by customers specific to their experiences. This can be regional, like the Dorset panel, or area specific, such as Domestic Abuse (DA), emotional health, and supported housing. These panels convene regularly and consider agenda items arising from their experiences or local/national issues. They may also form temporary sub-groups to address specific issues or tasks.



Focus Groups

Focus Groups are formed to tackle specific issues (co-production) on behalf of customers or in response to issues raised by BCHA or external events (e.g., Green Agenda, Policy Reviews, cost of living). These groups usually meet once in an informal setting, encouraging open discussion to help shape new services or initiatives.

Surveys

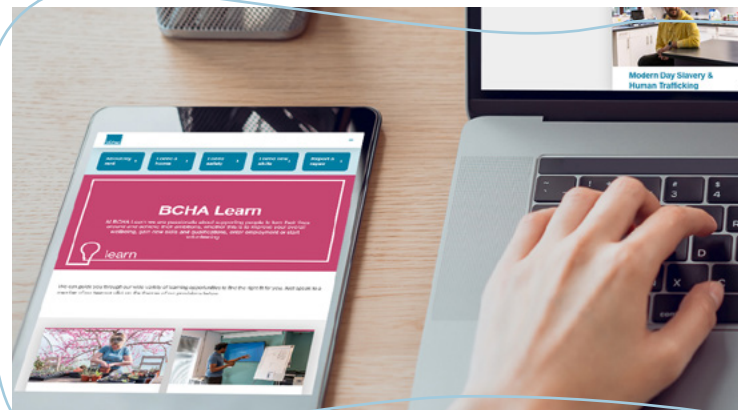


Occasionally, customers will be invited to participate in digital or postal surveys. Each survey focuses on a specific housing service, allowing customers to share their views and contribute to shaping the services provided by BCHA without needing to join a physical group.

Additionally, once per quarter, you may receive a random call from an organisation called Acuity, who will ask questions specifically related to the Customer Satisfaction Measure. This survey gives customers the opportunity to provide confidential feedback about our services.

Other Ways to Get Involved

We encourage customers to keep an eye on our website, social media, and correspondence for activities of interest. We offer a range of opportunities depending on your locality, such as training through BCHA Learn. For more information on how to get involved, please reach out to your Tenancy officer.



Consumer Standards



Our Engagement opportunities allow us to meet legal obligation under described in the UK's Consumer Standards for 2024 which focus on ensuring that social housing customers have safe, high-quality homes and a strong voice in how their housing services are managed.

Here are the key points:

- 🔒 **Safety and Quality:** Landlords must ensure homes are safe, well maintained, and meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- 🏠 **Health and Safety:** Landlords are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of customers in their homes and communal areas.
- 🔧 **Repairs and Maintenance:** An efficient and timely service for repairs, maintenance, and planned improvements must be provided.

Customer Engagement

Customers should have opportunities to influence and shape the services they receive. These standards aim to improve the overall living conditions and ensure customers have a significant role in decision-making processes related to their housing.

As part of the consumer standards The UK's Tenancy Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) for 2024 are designed to help customers understand how well their landlords are performing in key areas.

- 🌀 Property Maintenance: Ensuring homes are kept in good repair. Building Safety: Maintaining the safety of buildings.
- 🌀 Complaints Handling: Effective and timely resolution of complaints.
- 🌀 Customer Engagement: Respectful and helpful engagement with customers.

Neighbourhood Management

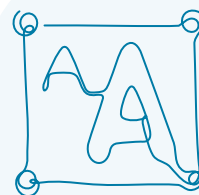
Responsible management of the surrounding neighbourhood measures aim to provide transparency and accountability, ensuring that customers have a clear view of their landlord's performance and can hold them to account.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The text of this handbook is available in other formats including audio, Braille, and large print.

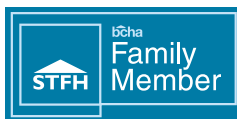
To request this handbook in an alternative format, please contact Customer services on **01202 410500**. Please also contact Customer services if you need this information translated into your first language.

You are welcome to be supported by a representative or advocate in interactions about our landlord services with us.





FAMILY MEMBERS



WITH THANKS TO

Board Members of BCHA

Our corporate and grant funders and our commissioners

Customers of BCHA for getting involved and making a difference

PARTNERS AND ASSOCIATIONS WE ARE PROUD TO BE MEMBERS OF



Need help with homes, wellbeing and learning?

Call 01202 410 500 / Email customerservices@bcha.org.uk

The Factory, 14 Alder Hills, Poole, BH12 4AS

bcha.org.uk

