

Nehemiah UCHA Customer Handbook



Information about your tenancy and the services
that we provide

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About us

Our mission is to build successful, sustainable and diverse communities by providing housing and well-being services in a culturally sensitive way to our current and our future customers.

Nehemiah has a portfolio of 1100 properties serving the multicultural African Caribbean, Asian, Irish and European communities within the West Midlands. The Association provides homes for single people, families, couples and elderly people in Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

As a landlord, we pride ourselves on being accountable and accessible to the communities we serve. As a Support and wellbeing Provider, we assist people to obtain and maintain tenancies, and make a major contribution in the prevention of homelessness.

We have responded to the needs of our customers by providing large homes for those with extended families, specially designed homes for people with disabilities or specific religious/cultural needs, and energy efficient homes to minimise the impact of fuel poverty.

Nehemiah is committed to serving the community and aims to build it into a thriving social unit in which people of all ethnic backgrounds feel at home and valued. The provision of good, affordable housing is the platform from which the Association has committed itself to the community at large, conveying the idea of value and a sense of caring.

Our Objectives

Nehemiah's Objectives

Nehemiah will passionately pursue the following objectives:

- To be effective and grow
- Deliver excellent services
- Deliver through the best people and partnerships
- Be open, transparent and accountable in governance and risk management
- Support equalities through our work in and with communities
- Deliver Social investment through monitoring our environmental, economic and social impact

Our Values

Nehemiah's values are:

- Customer and community focus – we endeavour to keep our residents happy and contented.
- Integrity and reliability – the integrity of our actions will always be guided by our Christian ethos. We will always be open and transparent.
- Maintaining relationships – we will maintain relationships with all our key stakeholders
- Sustainable Futures – we will encourage tenancy sustainability through listening to customers and adopting strategies to explore how new technologies can support affordable housing
- Providing Value – we will respect and support our communities to access services at quality which meets their needs at a reasonable cost
- Responsible Growth – we will grow responsibly and where we have access to the skills to achieve this change

Contact us

Head Office:

1-3 Beacon Court, Birmingham Road, Great Barr, Birmingham, B43 6NN

Telephone: 0121 358 0966

Fax: 0121 358 0934

Office Opening hours:

Mon- Thurs 9.00am- 5.00pm

Fri 9.00am- 4.30pm

Repair line Number-

From a landline: FREEPHONE 0800 849 1400

From a mobile: 03030 30 1000*

*Calls to 03030 numbers cost the same as a normal land line number (even from a mobile), or are completely free if the caller has free minutes within their mobile phone tariff

Out of hours/ Emergency repairs – Telephone number is the same as the above.

Older Persons Housing Schemes

Charles Pearson Court

Mill Drive, Smethwick, Warley, B66 3HE

Telephone: 0121 558 0904

Plummer House

Burlington Street, Aston, Birmingham, B6 4UB

Telephone: 0121 333 5845

Henry Court

Charlton Street, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 3AF

Telephone: 01384 240093

Nehemiah Court

38 Bath Road, Caldmore, Walsall, WS1 3BS

Telephone 01922 623660

McCalla House

Laburnum Street, Graiseley, Wolverhampton, WV3 0BT

Telephone 01902 429974

Father Joe Taaffe House

163 Alcester Street, Digbeth, Birmingham, B12 0PH

Tel: 0121 772 7187

Woodside House

Lamb Close, Shard End, Birmingham B34 7SF

Tel: 0121 747 4362

Online

Website: www.nehemiah-ucha.co.uk

Email for general enquiries: contact@nehemiah-ucha.co.uk

Facebook: facebook.com/nehemiahucha

Twitter: @NehemiahUCHA

We welcome feedback about our services

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

If you are not satisfied with the service that you have received then you can complain. Nehemiah welcomes complaints as they allow us to improve our services.

The simplest way of resolving your concerns is to contact your housing officer or scheme manager. If this does not resolve the matter, you can make a complaint in the following ways-

- Fill in a complaint form - you can get this by contacting the main office or from www.nehemiah-ucha.co.uk
- Face to face: visit our office or ask a member of staff to visit you
- Letter: you can write to us at the main office
- Email: info@nehemiah-ucha.co.uk
- Via an advocate such as a friend or family member. We will need confirmation that you are happy for them to act on your behalf

There are some instances where we cannot consider complaints.

For example, complaints that

- Are going through a court or tribunal (including disrepair cases)
- Are persistent, unreasonable or vexatious.

In such cases, we reserve the right to restrict or change access to our complaints service.

What happens after I complain?

Stage One

Your complaint is logged and forwarded to the relevant senior manager.

- Within one working day the manager will contact you to arrange a time to visit, discuss the complaint and agree a resolution. The visit will take place within 10 working days of receiving the complaint.
- Following the visit and investigation you will receive written confirmation of the outcome within 3 working days.

If you are unhappy with the outcome, then your complaint can be progressed to stage 2. You have 4 weeks to appeal a decision.

Stage Two

Your complaint will be reviewed by a member of the executive team.

- They will review how the complaint has been dealt with and contact you within 14 days.
- If they consider that further action is needed to resolve the complaint, an action plan will be agreed with you to be completed in a specified timescale.
- You will be advised of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 14 days.

What if I am still not satisfied with the outcome?

You can ask for your complaint to be reviewed by Nehemiah complaints panel. The panel is made up of trained tenants and is convened as and when required.

The panel will meet and try to resolve your complaint. However, where this is not possible the panel will refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman on your behalf.

The Housing Ombudsman is an independent organisation that considers complaints against housing organisations. Referrals can also be made through-

- Your local councillor or MP
- Directly, 8 weeks after receiving a decision from Nehemiah.

The Ombudsman can be contacted in the following ways-

Telephone- 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Data Protection

Nehemiah follows strict guidelines as set out by the Data Protection Act 1988, about how we collect and process your personal information.

How your personal data is handled

Your data may be accessed by our employees, officers and team members who require access for the purposes of carrying out their work. Data may on occasion be accessed by third parties where required by law or where necessary for the provision of our services. Such third parties include:

- Contractors
- Emergency services
- Government agencies
- Health services
- Regulatory bodies
- Utility companies
- Legal advisers
- Local authorities
- Police and other statutory Bodies
- Debt collection agencies

Where your data is passed to a third party, we will ensure that they understand our data protection obligations and make sure they maintain sufficient security measures.

We may also disclose your data if we are under a duty to disclose or share such personal data in order to comply with any legal obligation, or in order to enforce any of our legal rights

You have the right to access information that we hold about you. Your rights of access are set out in the Data Protection Act 1988. If you make a request for access, **we may charge of fee of £10** to meet our costs in providing you with details of the information we hold about you, however Nehemiah has the discretion to waive this charge.

If you would like more information about this, please contact the main office.

Managing your tenancy

Home Contents Insurance

Nehemiah does not insure customer's furniture, belongings or decorations against theft, fire, vandalism or water damage. We recommend that all customers take out home contents insurance as it can be very expensive to replace your belongings if the worst should happen. You can do this by making your own arrangements or through a special scheme arranged by Aon, through Aviva. Please contact your housing officer or the main office if you would like more information about this scheme.

Charity furniture shops

We understand that moving to a new home can sometimes be a stressful and costly experience. We have therefore put together a list of charity furniture shops that sell mainly second hand goods in your area. If you would like a copy of this, please contact the main office or look on our website.

Gardens

We expect you to keep your garden clean and tidy and free from rubbish. You are responsible for maintaining your front and back garden, unless you pay a service charge for us to maintain it for example, if you have a communal garden.

Bulky waste

Do not dump large items of rubbish, such as sofas or beds outside of your property or in communal hallways. This is a health and safety risk and also a fire hazard. Some local councils provide a free removal service for bulky items. Please contact your local council for further information.

Your Tenancy Agreement

When you begin your tenancy, you will sign a tenancy agreement. This is a legal document and will give you information about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and also about the rights and responsibilities of us as your landlord. If you break the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement, you risk losing your home.

Assured Non Shorthold Tenancy

This is a standard tenancy agreement. As long as you comply with the terms and conditions of your tenancy, it allows you to live in your home for as long as you want. Nehemiah can only end this type of tenancy agreement by applying for a court order

for example if you have broken your tenancy conditions due to unpaid rent or anti-social behaviour. The court will then decide if it is reasonable to end your tenancy.

Shorthold Tenancy

These tenancies have a specific end date, usually after six months. Assured shorthold tenancies are usually given to tenants in temporary, supported accommodation. Assured shorthold tenancies may be extended for further periods. An assured shorthold tenancy agreement can only be brought to an end by the service of a section 21 notice. A section 21 notice gives a landlord mandatory possession through the County Court. Nehemiah will seek to end a tenancy if you have broken the terms and conditions for example due to unpaid rent or antisocial behaviour.

Fair rent tenancy

This type of tenancy is also known as a secure tenancy and is common for customers whose tenancy began before 1989. For these types of tenancies there are rules about how and when the rent can be increased.

Joint Tenancies

A joint tenancy is when two people are named in the tenancy agreement.

These tenancies are usually given to couples and means that both people are jointly responsible for all parts of the tenancy.

If one joint tenant dies, the tenancy is passed on to the other joint tenant.

If you have a sole tenancy and wish to have a joint tenancy with someone who lives with you, you must put this request in writing to Nehemiah. Both you and the person wishing to become a joint tenant must sign the letter.

The person must not own or rent any other property and must have lived in the property with you for a minimum of 12 months and have evidence of this such as bank statements or utility bills.

If you get married or enter into a civil partnership and want to create a joint tenancy, the 12 month rule does not apply. In this case you must provide a copy of the marriage certificate.

However, Nehemiah UCHA will not grant a joint tenancy to any tenant where a court order is in place. For further information on joint tenancies, please contact your housing officer.

Right to succession

The law states that a tenancy succession can only happen once per tenancy. If you did not succeed to your tenancy, in most cases the tenancy can be automatically taken over by your spouse or someone over the age of 18 that has lived with you for 12 months in the event of your death.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the main office.

Lodgers and subletting

A lodger is someone who lives with you and also pays the rent. If you want to take in a lodger, you must get the written permission of Nehemiah. If you are in receipt of housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit, taking in a lodger might affect your entitlement. You must inform the benefit service if there is a change to the people living in your household.

Subletting your property (where you move out and charge a person for living in your home) is not allowed and is a breach of the terms and conditions of your tenancy.

Moving to a new home

If you want to transfer to another Nehemiah property, you can do so either by applying to

- The local authority in the area that you want to move
- Homesdirect (www.homesdirect.org.uk)
- Swap and move (www.swapandmove.co.uk)

Nehemiah advertises our properties that are available to let on the above websites. Most of our properties are allocated through choice based letting where applicants have to bid for the properties that they are interested in.

If you need to move urgently:

Harassment/ Domestic abuse

Wherever possible Nehemiah will endeavour to offer alternative accommodation through our lettings policy using the management move provision where this is an appropriate solution. Where this is not possible we will work with other housing organisations to secure alternative accommodation using local protocols to do this.

If you would like further information about moving home, please contact your housing officer or head office.

Ending your tenancy

If you want to end your tenancy, you must give 4 weeks notice by signing a notice of termination, expiring on a Sunday.

Nehemiah will make arrangements with you to carry out a property inspection prior to you leaving. Do not abandon your home, as you will be responsible for any rent outstanding or any damage to the property up to the date that Nehemiah finds out and the property is relet. Keys must be handed in by 12.00pm on a Monday or you will be liable for a further weeks rent.

Nehemiah reserves the right to remove and/or destroy articles left in the premises after you have vacated, and to recover from you the cost of any items prior to collection by you and the cost of disposing any items if you do not collect them.

Clean before you leave scheme

When you end your tenancy, you could receive a reward of £150. In order to claim this you will need to ensure that the property is left clean and tidy, and in a good state of repair, that you have paid all rent that is due and that you return the keys to us on an agreed date.

If you would like more information on the clean before you leave scheme, please contact the office.

Anti-social Behaviour

Everyone has the right to live peacefully in their home. Nehemiah expects all tenants to be considerate to one another. You are responsible for the behaviour of the people living in your home and any visitors to your property.

Nehemiah is committed to tackling and preventing anti-social behaviour. This is defined as “any conduct capable of causing a nuisance or annoyance to anyone”.

Examples of anti-social behaviour include:

- Noise nuisance.
- Intimidation and harassment.
- Aggressive and threatening language and behaviour.
- Hate-related behaviour and/or incidents that targets members of identified groups because of their perceived differences (e.g. race, sexual orientation, gender, disability, religion, age).
- Domestic abuse
- Vandalism and damage to property.
- Nuisance from vehicles.
- Actual violence against people and property or land.
- Nuisance caused by alcohol and solvent abuse.
- Nuisance caused by pets and animals.
- Any illegal or immoral behaviour

When you report anti-social behaviour to us, we will:

Be honest about what we can and cannot do and what you can expect from us in dealing with your report. We can also put you in touch with support agencies.

We will provide you with a named contact responsible for dealing with your report. If we identify anti-social behaviour, we will agree an action plan which will include what Nehemiah will do and also what you need to do to assist us with our investigations.

Remedies for Dealing with Anti-social Behaviour

Nehemiah will use a range of options, depending upon the nature of the case, to resolve the anti-social behaviour, which could include any of the following:

Non Legal Action

- **Interviews and warnings** - this will be necessary before more formal action is taken.
- **Mediation** – with a trained mediator who remains impartial throughout the process.

- **Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC)** – a contract signed voluntarily by the person committing the anti-social behaviour that they will change their behaviour.
- **Parenting Contracts/Programmes** – these involve working with agencies to provide support to parents to help them exercise control over their child's behaviour.

Legal Action

Nehemiah will consider legal action if all other means of resolving the complaint have failed. Where anti-social behaviour is very serious we may start legal action straightaway.

- **Injunction**- this is a court order requiring a person to do something or prevent them from doing something.
- **Demotion of Tenancy** – is a court order reducing the tenancy rights of a person responsible for anti-social behaviour for a period of 12 months.
- **Possession Proceedings** (eviction) – as a last resort, we will make an application for a possession order asking the Court to end the tenancy of a customer who is acting in an anti-social manner.
- **Ending an Assured Shorthold Tenancy** – these are short term tenancies issued to customers living in supported housing schemes. Nehemiah may end the tenancy by serving a Section 21 Notice.

Closing a case

We will stop investigating a case where the problem has been sorted or where we are satisfied that we have done everything reasonably possible to sort out the problem.

Once we have closed your case, we may contact you to get your feedback on how you felt we dealt with your case. This will help us to continually improve our services.

Pet Ownership

Nehemiah recognises that keeping pets can offer significant benefits to their owners, however irresponsible ownership can cause nuisance and affect the quality of life of others living nearby.

Note: customers living in a young parent scheme will **not** be allowed to keep a dog or a cat because of the possible risk to the babies and young children that live at the project.

You do not need to ask Nehemiah for permission to keep a pet. However, in order to protect the health and safety of Nehemiah residents and employees, we do not allow you to keep any dogs listed in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and any animals listed in the Schedule of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976.

Residents are responsible for the health and welfare of their animals and must ensure that their property size is sufficient for the number and type of pets that they have as seen below.

Dog size definitions

Examples are:

Small Dogs	Yorkshire Terrier, Jack Russell, and Chihuahua.
Medium sized dogs	Collie, Whippet and Lurcher
Large dogs	Golden Retriever, Labrador and German Shepherd
Giant dogs	Great Dane, Irish Wolf Hound, St Bernard, Mastiff.

Guidelines of Property Sizes and Maximum Number of Pets Allowed

1 and 2 bed flats	1 small dog or cat
2 bed house	1 large or medium size dog plus a cat or 2 small dogs plus a cat or 2 cats
3 and 4 bed houses	2 large /medium sized dogs or 1 large dog/medium sized dog and 2 small dogs or

	1 large dog/medium sized dog and 2 cats or No more than 3 cats
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If an enquiry or complaint is received about a pet, the customer will always be visited to discuss the issue. A solution will be identified in conjunction with the customers wherever possible. This may include:

- A move to a more suitable property.
- Provision of information on who to contact for pet welfare advice.
- Advice on rehoming if the customer is not willing or able to resolve the problem.
- Sending a letter confirming the situation and the likelihood of legal action if the customer does not comply with the requests.
- Legal action

Rent

Paying your rent on time is a condition of your tenancy. You are responsible for ensuring that your rent is paid, even if you receive housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit.

Rent and service charges

Your rent payments are due every week, if you prefer to pay your rent at a different frequency such as monthly please contact your housing officer.

If you live in a property where there is a communal area such as a garden, hallway or shared grounds, your rent will include a service charge which we will use to maintain the shared areas.

If you live in a retirement scheme, your rent might also include water charges.

Your tenancy agreement will include a breakdown of the charges that are included in your rent.

Your rent statement

We will send you a statement of your rent account every 3 months. This will give you information about your rent charges and the payments that you have made. If you have any queries about your statement, please contact your housing officer.

You can also request a statement of your rent account, at any other time by contacting your housing officer.

How your rent/service charge is set

Service Charge

Nehemiah charge for services on the basis either of reasonable costs incurred during the previous accounting period or on estimates for the current or next account period. The difference between any estimate and the actual cost may be carried forward.

Rent

The government have recently announced that they are changing the formula that they use to calculate rents. Once the formula has been confirmed by the government, we will provide you with an update on our website.

Ways to pay your rent

There are a variety of ways that you can pay for your rent.

Nehemiah Allpay rent payment swipe card

Your rent payment card can be used to pay your rent at any outlet that displays the "Paypoint sign". You may only pay by cash at Paypoint outlets.

Your rent payment card can also be used at any post office. You can make your payments by cash, cheque or debit card.

Online

Go to www.allpay.net and follow the onscreen instructions to pay by debit card.

Automated Telephone

This service is operated by Allpay on our behalf and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 0844 557 8321 and follow the simple instructions to pay your rent by debit card. Calls will last approximately 2 minutes and are charged at a local rate. You will need your Nehemiah Allpay card reference number.

Direct Debit

Paying by direct debit means that your rent will be paid directly from your bank account. This is the most convenient payment method for you and us.

If you want to set up a direct debit, please contact the office. We can send you out a form, which you will need to complete and send back to us. Alternatively, we can set up your direct debit by taking your bank details over the telephone.

You can cancel your direct debit at any time but you must make alternative arrangements to make your rent payments.

Standing Order

You can ask your bank to pay your rent directly from your account to us. You will need to tell your bank how much to pay and how often to pay. If there is a change to your rent, you will need to inform your bank and they will change the payment amount.

Please contact the office if you want to pay by standing order and we will send you out a form. You will need to complete the form and return it to your bank. Alternatively, you can download the form from our website. Please visit www.nehemiah-ucha.co.uk and go to the "paying your rent section."

Telephone payments to the office

You can also make rent payments using your debit card by telephoning the office during our opening hours.

Help with rent payments

Housing benefit

If you are unemployed or on a low income, you may be entitled to housing benefit to help with the cost of your rent payments. If you need to make a claim for housing benefit please contact your local council. They will tell you how to make your claim and also what information you need to provide. Housing benefit claims can now also be made on line.

If you receive housing benefit, you must inform the benefit office and your housing officer of any change in your circumstances such as a change in your income or the people who live in your household. If you do not inform them and us, they might pay more rent than you are entitled to which could lead to you having rent arrears if they need to claim the money back from you. This could put you at risk of losing your home.

Universal credit

Housing benefit will soon be replaced by Universal Credit. This will mean that all rent payments will be paid directly to you. You will then be responsible for making this payment to Nehemiah. If you require more information or advice about universal credit, please contact your housing officer or income management officer.

Failing to pay your rent

If you are experiencing any difficulty with paying your rent, please contact the office immediately. You can contact your housing officer or our dedicated income management officer. We will help you to make a realistic arrangement to clear any rent arrears. If you still fail to pay your rent, we will start legal action against you.

We will first issue you with a notice of seeking possession. This notice advises you of the amount of arrears and that we will take legal action if you do not make an arrangement to clear your arrears. If you continue to not make your rent payments we will refer your case to court.

At the court hearing we will ask the judge to grant us either

- A Suspended Possession Order- where you agree to clear the arrears by instalments. If you fail to make the agreed payments we may apply to the court for a warrant to evict you.
- A Full Possession Order – you will be ordered to give up possession of the property if you do not clear the arrears in full.

You will be responsible for legal costs incurred in taking you to court.

Money Advice

Managing debt

If you are experiencing financial difficulties we can put you in touch with Birmingham Settlement. Birmingham Settlement provides free, confidential independent money and debt advice to Nehemiah residents.

Your housing officer can provide you with further details or you can contact Birmingham Settlement directly on 0121 250 0777 or www.birminghamsettlement.org.uk

Basic bank accounts

A basic bank account is the simplest type of bank account that you can have and allows you to receive money and make payments. You will be able to withdraw money from a cash machine but you will not have the option to go overdrawn. If you would like more information on basic bank accounts, please visit your local bank.

Credit Unions

Credit unions are local, not for profit co-operatives that offer a safe and simple way to save and access affordable loans. For details of your local credit union, please speak to your housing officer or visit www.nehemiah-ucha.co.uk and look under the paying your rent heading.

Repairs and Maintenance

Relet Standards

The following standard which has been developed by the Association and applies to the Association's properties which are void and are to be re-let.

The repair and re-let standards will:

- be available generally to residents.
- be tested through the satisfaction survey sent to new residents following the start of their tenancy. (To ensure there is a high level of satisfaction with the standard at which homes are re-let.)

The standard will not apply to those tenancies that occur through Mutual Exchanges where residents accept and are responsible for the condition of the property they take over. Gas safety checks will however be undertaken (as required under the Gas Regulations).

To ensure that our empty (void) properties are prepared to a consistent standard for re-letting, the following checks are completed-

Safety

Electrical and gas installations and appliances will be tested and certificated as safe. A copy of the gas safety record and electrical safety test certificate will be provided to the Association within 48 hours of completion.

All switches, light fittings and sockets will be securely fixed.

- Non-standard light fittings to be removed and replaced with a pendant fitting.
- Heating and water heating systems will be checked and be in proper working order.
- Fire doors and closers will be in place and working.
- All handrails and grab rails will be secure and fit for their intended purpose.

Energy Performance Certificate

- On notification of a void property the Property Surveyor will instruct the identified provider who will then undertake a domestic energy assessment of the property within 3 working days. On completion of the survey the EPC provider will email the Property Surveyor with a unique reference number which can then be used to download the EPC from the Central Register.

Security

- All windows will be capable of being fully opened and closed. Lockable windows will have keys provided.

- All external doors (including garages) will have new locks fitted and will be capable of being fully opened and closed. Two sets of keys will be provided.
- All cracked or broken glass will be replaced.

Cleanliness

The property will be empty, free from litter, dust, cobwebs and dirt. There will be no graffiti. Two air fresheners will be left in each property.

- All cobwebs will be removed.
- Drawing pins, sellotape, blue tack, tacks, nails and screws will be removed.
- Electrical sockets, light fittings and switches will be cleaned thoroughly
- Kitchen units, work surfaces, cupboards, drawers and sinks will be thoroughly cleaned inside and out and all cleaning residue will be removed.
- All bathroom fittings will be thoroughly cleaned, with particular attention paid to taps, tiles, mirrors and removing lime scale.
- Toilets will be cleaned in all areas including front, back, and bowl and around the U bend.
- A seal will be placed on the toilet once cleaned.
- The floor will be disinfected.
- Windows and frames will be clean.
- All doors, door frames and side casings will be thoroughly cleaned.
- Radiators will be cleaned, including dust and debris behind them.
- All skirting boards will be washed.
- All storage cupboards will be swept, dusted and washed.
- Stairways and steps will be swept and washed.
- All tiled areas will be cleaned to a smear-free finish.
- All floors will be swept and mopped with disinfectant, cuff marks will be removed.
- New sanitary ware will be cleaned and all paper and polythene removed.
- Shower curtains left by the previous tenant will be removed.

All cleaning should leave no marks, smears or streaks.

In good condition

External

- The roof will be watertight.
- Gutters and rainwater goods will be clear.
- Structural fabrication of the building and attached canopies, outhouses/garages, including pointing and rendering will be safe and watertight.
- Windows and doors will be secure and fully serviceable with glazing intact.
- Paths will be safe, weed free and firmly bedded.
- External handrails will be safe.
- Drainage systems will be free flowing and functional, drainage covers will be provided.
- Inspection chambers will be safe and accessible.

Internal

- All existing gas/electrical/water/smoke/burglar alarm appliances and systems within the dwelling will be safe and functional.
- Roof spaces will be clear of debris and existing firebreaks will be intact.
- Ceilings and walls will be free from visible major defects.
- Internal doors and furniture will be correctly fitting and serviceable.
- Architraves and skirting boards will be complete.
- Floors will be sound and secure and free from major defects.
- Staircases will be sound and secure.
- Gripper rods will be removed.
- Door stops will be fitted where necessary.
- Sanitary wares will be unchipped, un-cracked and safe and fit for purpose.
- Stop taps will be fully functioning and their location will be drawn to the attention of tenants at the start of the tenancy.
- Splash back and wall tiles will be in place and intact.
- Where repair work has been carried out, damaged wall coverings will be removed.
- Polystyrene tiles will be removed.
- Vents will be unobstructed for the free flow of air.
- All material and debris will be removed from site.

Decorations

The property may need redecoration. We will only decorate if:

- Wallpaper is peeling from the walls and re-sticking is impractical.
- The room is affected by mould.
- The room has water or nicotine staining.
- There is graffiti on the walls/ceilings which cannot be removed.
- The kitchen or bathroom are deemed to be unhygienic.
- We will not remove sound wallpaper or overpaint vivid colours.
- We operate a decoration voucher scheme.

Gardens/curtilages

- All rubbish, broken glass and sharps will be removed.
- All grassed areas will be trimmed, raked and cuttings removed.
- Pathways will be weeded free.
- All bins will be empty.
- Ponds will be removed.
- Paths and steps will be checked for safety.
- Green houses will be removed.
- Sheds will be removed, except when they are in good serviceable and safe condition in which case the incoming tenant will be given the option to keep them but will be asked to sign a form to take responsibility for it.

Kitchens

- The kitchen will have a minimum of one sink base unit, one double floor and one double wall unit.

- Taps will work and not drip, waste pipes will be free-flowing and pipe work will be checked for leaks.
- There will be a gas and/or electric cooker point for a cooker.
- Any uncapped waste connections will be sealed.
- Washing machine connectors will be provided.
- Any Nehemiah UCHA fitted ventilation system will be cleaned and serviced.
- Flooring will be clean and washable.
- Worktops will be hygienic.
- Cooker spaces and worktops will have glazed tile splash backs

Bathrooms

- Taps will work and not drip, waste pipes will be free-flowing and pipe work will be checked for leaks.
- There will be a plug and chain to the bath and basin.
- Tiled splash backs will be sound, grouted and sealed.
- Chipped or cracked sanitary wares will be replaced.
- A new toilet seat will be provided and, pipe work checked for leaks and that the toilet cistern is flushing correctly. The toilet will be cleaned and sealed.
- Electric showers and ventilation systems will be serviced.
- Flooring will be clean and washable.

Lofts

- Lofts will be empty; the access to them will be safe.
- Hard wired alarm services
- Alarm pull cord equipment will be checked to make sure it is working.

Keys

The following number of keys will be provided to tenants of a re-let property:

- 2 front door keys.
- 2 back door keys (if lock changed or as many as are inherited).
- 2 communal entrance keys and/or fobs

Non-standard fixtures and fittings

- Some tenants carry out DIY to their homes such as fitted wardrobes, electric showers, built-in cookers or conservatories or leave laminate or carpet flooring. Our surveyors will assess the maintenance and health and safety issues and where appropriate the item will be left in the property and we will gift it to the new tenant. This should be agreed with the Maintenance Officer or Inspector at the time of the pre-inspection

Reporting repairs

How to report a repair

It is important that you report a repair as soon as you are aware that it needs to be done.

By Phone:

In order to report a repair you must contact the repair line-

From a landline: FREEPHONE 0800 849 1400

From a mobile: 03030 30 1000*

*Calls to 03030 numbers cost the same as a normal land line number (even from a mobile), or are completely free if the caller has free minutes within their mobile phone tariff

The above number must also be used to report out of hours/ emergency repair.

We are unable to log repairs at our head office.

What happens when you report a repair?

- You will be asked for your name, address and contact details
- The advisor will discuss the details of the repair and put it onto the computer system
- You will be told what category the repair is in, the length of time that it will take for it to be completed and if it is rechargeable.
- You will be contacted by one of our contractors to arrange an appointment for the work to be completed. You are responsible for allowing access for the repair to be completed between 8am-5pm.
- When the repair has been completed, we will ask you what you thought of the service by asking you to complete a short satisfaction survey.

Repair Response Times

When you report a repair, it is categorised depending on how urgent it is. We will tell you which category it has been placed in and the length of time that it will take us to carry out the repair.

TYPE OF REPAIR	CLASSIFICATION OF REPAIR	RESPONSE TIME
No electricity Gas leaks Mains water leak Security of property (excluding glass)	EMERGENCY	Completed within 24 hours or make safe until a permanent repair can be completed. Where there is danger to life or damage to property this is normally dealt with within 2 hours.
Electrical faults Plumbing faults Blocked drains	URGENT	Completed within 5 days
Space heating Water heating faults Roof leaks Storm damage Gutter repairs Woodwork repairs Kitchen fittings Plaster repairs Structural repairs	NORMAL	Completed within 14 working days
Major repairs or Replacement of building elements	MAJOR WORKS	Completed to planned maintenance programme

Repair Responsibilities

Your responsibilities

You are responsible for repairing/replacing the following items:

- Fuses
- Cupboard catches
- Key to door and window locks
- Plugs and chains to sinks, basins and baths
- TV aerials- unless you pay a service charge for this
- Surface damage to internal plasterwork
- Pelmet, curtain and picture rails
- Gate and shed latches, bolts and catches
- Insulation materials including that used for water tanks/pipes
- Fixtures or fittings you or a previous tenant have put in (unless we have agreed to maintain it for you)
- Any damage caused by you, your pets, a member of your household or your visitors.
- Gardening- unless you pay a service charge for this

The following items will be provided at the start of your tenancy. After that it is your responsibility to repair or replace them.

- Door handles
- Sealant around sinks, baths and kitchen work surfaces
- Cylinder jackets
- Toilet seats/chains/handles
- Clothes line post
- Drawer handles
- Door numbers and letter plates
- Glazed tiles around the bath, basin or sink

You are responsible for carrying out the following activities:

- Bleeding radiators
- Removing scale from taps, baths, sinks and toilet pans
- Lubricating hinges and locks
- Replacing lost keys and cutting extra keys
- Plumbing in washing machines
- Replacing light bulbs and fluorescent tubes
- Unblocking toilets, sinks and basins
- Replacing sheds

If you have circumstances which make it difficult for you to carry out any repairs that you are responsible for, please contact a member of the property services team at head office.

Our responsibilities

We are responsible for the following:

- The structure and outside parts of the property that you live in– this includes the roof, walls, windows and external doors.
- The maintenance of fencing as long as you have not erected this yourself
- Shared/communal areas- such as lifts and communal entrances
- Fixtures and fittings that we have installed
- All water and gas pipes, wiring and heating systems

Electrical safety responsibilities

As your landlord we are required by law to make sure that

- Wiring in your home is safe
- Any appliances that we have provided are safe

This applies to all types of tenancies.

Right to Repair

We are required by law to carry out certain small urgent repairs within a certain time frame. If we do not complete them within the timeframe, you may be entitled to compensation.

If you would like more information about what repairs are covered by the scheme and the length of time that we have to complete the job, please contact a member of the property services team at head office.

Repairs Recharge Policy

Customers will be recharged for repair work that is required by them or noted by a member of staff for which Nehemiah is not responsible.

As stated in the tenancy agreement, Nehemiah reserves the right to charge any customer the reasonable costs for a repair that occurs as a result of accidental or wilful damage that has been caused by the customer, their pets, family or visitors.

Examples of damage include the following

- Lock changes/forced entry

- Abortive contractor call outs

- Cleaning charges incurred due to fouling by pets

- Broken windows

- Alterations/replacements to fixtures and fittings supplied by Nehemiah

- A blocked toilet, drain or a sewer caused by an act or neglect of the customer, their family or visitor

- Damage caused by the police in the execution of warrants

If you would like more information about Nehemiah's repair recharge policy, please contact a member of the property services team.

Gas Safety

We are required by law to service any gas appliances in your home each year. This is to ensure that they are in a safe condition. Faulty gas appliances can give off carbon monoxide, which can kill very quickly.

As part of your tenancy agreement, you are required to allow us access to your home to carry out the gas servicing. If you do not allow us access to your home, we will take court action to gain access/ seek possession.

Home Improvements

If you wish to make any improvements or alterations to your home, you must get our written permission before you start the work. You might also need to apply for planning permission from the local authority.

Examples include:

- Putting up fences
- Building a conservatory
- Building a patio
- Fitting a satellite dish
- Knocking down or building a wall
- Installing a shower
- Fitting a kitchen/bathroom

To get our permission you must put your request in writing, giving us all the details of the improvements that you would like to make. We will then respond to your request in writing advising you of our decision.

If you are unsure if you need our permission to carry out an improvement or alteration, please contact a member of the property services team at head office.

Switching on your boiler system when you first move into your property

When you move into your property, you will need to arrange to have your boiler turned on. In order to do this you must take the following steps-

Call National Grid on **0870 608 1524** to find out who your gas supplier is

Call Central Networks on **0845 606 0618/0870 607 0459** to find out who your electricity supplier is

You must then contact the gas and electricity company and arrange to have your supplies switched on.

Once you have a supply of gas and electricity, call the repair line on 0800 849 1400 (landline) or 03030 30 1000 (mobile)

Inform them that you are a new customer and you are arranging to have your boiler re commissioned

You must give them at least 48 hour's notice and you must be at the property when the gas contractor calls to carry out the work.

Using your heating system

Your heating controls

Your home will either be fitted with a time clock or digital programmer. This allows you to set the times that your heating and hot water comes on and off. Instructions for using both the time clock and digital programmer will be given to you at the start of your tenancy. If you have any queries with operating your heating system, please contact a member of the property services team.

The room thermostat

This is usually found on the wall in the hallway and controls the temperature of your home. It is advisable to set this to between 18 to 21 degrees. Turning your heating down 1 degree can save as much as 10% on your energy bills.

Using electric storage heaters

Electric storage heaters are designed to store heat overnight, when electricity is cheapest. The heat is then released during the day.

Your storage heaters will usually have two controls located under a flap at the top of your heater. These are 'Input' and 'Output':

Input

This controls how much heat is stored. You will use this dial to determine how much heat you think you will need the next day. The higher you turn the dial, the more heat you will store and more electricity you will use. It is advisable to set your input dial to midway to start.

When you start to use your storage heater, if you find that the room is too hot or cold, adjust the dial to suit.

Have it on a low setting during mild weather and a higher setting in colder weather. As the weather gets warmer, start to turn your input dial down.

Output

This controls how much heat you want for your room. The higher the dial, the more heat you will give out until the heat in the storage heater runs out.

It is advisable to start off by setting your dial on your storage heater to a minimum and then turn up if you feel you require more heat.

Your output dial on your storage heater should be turned down to 1 before you go to bed and then turned to zero. This will help to prevent heat being used throughout the night when it may not be needed. If you have a room which isn't being used, turn the output dial on your storage heater to 1 to help prevent condensation and mould.

Aids and Adaptions

If your needs change, you may require extra equipment or facilities so you can continue to enjoy living in your home. An aid is portable equipment, like a bath seat or a walker, which may be provided free by social services.

An adaptation is an alteration to your home to allow you to move around or use the home more easily. If you require more information about applying for an aid or adaption please contact your housing officer.

Getting involved with Nehemiah

Involving our customers in influencing service delivery allows us to improve services and get a better understanding of their needs and aspirations. We aim to engage more customers in any way which meets their available time and interest.

Involving customers in the decisions we make, helps us to

- Increase customer satisfaction
- Ensure policies and decisions meet the needs of customers
- Comply with regulatory and statutory requirements

Some ways to get involved-

- Review our Policies
Tell us what you like about our new policies and what areas you think needs improvement.
- Join our Scrutiny panel
We currently operate a scrutiny panel that carries out in depth service reviews, the panel then make recommendations for improvements.
- Join our Sheltered housing panel
If you live in any of our supported or retirement schemes, you can join our panel and have your say on the services that customers living in our retirement schemes receive.
- Contractor selection
Have your say and help us select the contractors that provide essential services such as cleaning and gas maintenance.

If you would like to find out more about getting involved, please contact the customer engagement officer at the main office.

Nehemiah Academy

The Nehemiah UCHA Academy and Charitable Aid Foundation offers Nehemiah UCHA customers and those in the local community the opportunity to achieve their educational aspirations and improve their career prospects.

Work Placement

Nehemiah work with a number of schools, colleges and community groups to offer work placements. Placements offer an excellent opportunity to gain real life experience in all the aspects of running a housing association.

Graduate Internships

We currently offer graduate internships that usually last for 2 years. This offers graduates an excellent opportunity to gain in depth experience of all aspects of running a housing association.

Educational Support programme

The Educational Support programme offers the opportunity to secure a grant of up to £1,500 to go towards course fees and study resources.

If you would like to get more information on the Nehemiah UCHA academy, please contact the main office.

Housing for Older people

Retirement living schemes

Our retirement living schemes allow customers to live in their individual flats within the main building and benefit from having use of communal facilities and a scheme manager on site. Most schemes also have CCTV coverage throughout the communal areas.

Communal rooms/areas

All schemes have communal rooms that can be enjoyed by our customers. Some communal rooms can also be hired by our customers and outside agencies. If you would like further information about hiring our communal rooms, please contact the scheme manager.

Scheme manager

Most scheme managers are on site each day; however this will vary depending on which scheme you live in.

Your scheme manager is responsible for:

- Keeping you up to date with what is happening in your scheme.
- Providing you with advice and support to help you maintain your health and wellbeing.
- Ensuring that your home and the scheme is safe, secure and well maintained.
- Providing you with help and advice to ensure that you get the income that you are entitled to.
- Giving you the opportunity to take part in social activities and learn new skills.
- Helping you understand your tenancy rights and obligations.
- Answering any queries that you might have about the running of the scheme.

More information about the role of the scheme manager can be found in our leaflet “the role of the scheme manager”.

Emergency alarm system

Your home is fitted to an emergency alarm service that is looked after by a central control team. The alarm service gives you the reassurance that you can alert people to help you in an emergency, 24 hours a day.

You can activate the alarm through the pull cords in your property or through pushing the button on your pendant if you have one.

If you live in a retirement scheme, calls will be logged and answered by the scheme manager if they are on site. Otherwise, calls will be logged and answered by the central control team. Staff at the control centre are specially trained to deal with emergency calls and will talk with you to get as much information as possible to ensure you get the correct help that you need.

If you would like more information about the emergency alarm system, please speak to your scheme manager.

Pets in supported housing

Customers living in retirement living flats will be allowed to have 1 small dog or a cat. Pets will not be allowed to wander corridors or hallways. Dogs must be walked away from the scheme. Cats must be provided with a litter tray. All pets must be house trained. Customers will be asked to give the scheme manager or support worker information of another person willing to take care of their pet in the event of hospital admission an inability to look after the pet. Where a customer starts to experience difficulty looking after their pet the scheme manager or support worker will access advice and assistance from voluntary organisations such as the Cinnamon Trust that operate a network of dog walkers and foster carers across the UK for the elderly and terminally ill.

Personal effects

Customers should not leave any personal belongings in the communal areas of the schemes as they could be removed without prior warning. Customers should keep personal belongings with them at all times or leave them in their flats.