

GROVE COMMUNITY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

TENANT'S HANDBOOK

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide you with information about your rights and obligations as a tenant of Grove Community Housing Association and also some information about your home. Your Tenancy Agreement is your legal contract with us but this Handbook provides additional details that we hope are useful to you. If you want further information about any item in this Handbook or about other tenancy matters, you are welcome to contact the Association.

Our commitment is to provide you with a quality home and a professional housing service.

If you would like the Handbook in a different format such as larger print, please contact us.

Introduction to Grove Community Housing Association

The Association was formed in 1976 and has therefore had a long term commitment to providing social housing in the York Road/Shore Road area. While some of the renovated old terraced houses remain, well over half of the Association's homes have been constructed since 2000.

Grove is controlled by a voluntary Board with members elected by shareholders. This Board is responsible for the proper running of the Association; it sets policies and ensures that staff members carry out their duties. Paid staff run the Association on a day to day basis.

Office Opening Hours & Contact Details

The Office is open to the public Monday to Thursday 9.30am to 1.00pm and 1.45 to 4.30pm, and Friday 9.30am to 1.00pm. Phones are answered from 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 9.00am to 4.30pm on Friday (excluding lunch).

Address: 171 York Road, Belfast BT15 3HB
Telephone: 028 9077 3330 **Fax:** 028 9077 1496
Email: info@groveha.org.uk
Website: www.groveha.org.uk

Pages Index

Repairs & Maintenance

- 2 -Reporting repairs
- Compensation for repairs
- 3 -Your responsibilities
- 4 -Grove's responsibilities
- Repairs & rent arrears
- Security
- Improvements, alterations
- Adaptations for disabled
- 5 -No gas, oil or electricity?
- Smoke alarms
- Water leaks
- Gas leaks & gas cookers
- Fire
- Escape windows
- 6 -Heating controls
- Frost protection
- Condensation

Rent

- 6 -Ways of paying rent
- Setting rents
- If you fall behind with rent
- 7 -Housing Benefit

Your Tenants' Rights

- 7 -Introductory tenancies
- Secure tenancies & rights

Tenants' Obligations

- 9 -Summary
- Other tenancy information**
- 9 -Becoming a shareholder
- “Your right to know”
- Contents insurance
- 10 -Giving up your tenancy
- Transfers & Exchanges
- Buying your home
- Energy saving tips
- 11 -Tenant participation
- Noise & nuisance

Complaints

- 11 -What is a complaint?
- Formal complaints

- 12 -Anti-social behaviour

Useful numbers

REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

2.

Reporting Repairs

Please report repairs to our Office at 171 York Road. This can be done by phone, in person, by letter or email (see contact details on front page). You can leave a message on the answering phone outside office hours.

Please give:

- your name, address and phone number
- details of the repair needed
- arrangements and times for workmen to call.

Emergency Repairs Outside Office Hours

If you need emergency repairs or advice about a repair and it cannot wait until the Office is open again, phone Fold Telecare on the Freephone number:

0800 731 3081

Telecare will contact our repair contractors.

Please do not ask contractors to come to your home unless the repair really cannot wait.



Repair Categories and Target Times

All repair requests are divided into the following four categories. These determine how quickly the Association needs to respond:

Emergency Repairs

Only genuine emergencies will be accepted in this group. These will be repairs that could be a risk to health and safety, which may lead to a major structural problem or could cause you major inconvenience.

- 24 hour target

Urgent Repairs

These are less serious repairs, which are not emergencies but where a prompt response is needed.

- 4 working day target

Routine Repairs

Most repairs will be classed as routine and should be carried out within the target time.

- 4 week target

Planned Maintenance and Improvements

Some major work, such as replacing windows or kitchens, will apply to a number of dwellings and will be grouped together in one scheme. External painting is carried out every 4 to 5 years. Boiler servicing will be done annually.

Compensation for Repairs

The Association will pay compensation in some circumstances. A brief outline is given below and details are available on request.

Please note that if you have rent arrears, the allowance must be used by the Association to reduce them.

Redecoration

A redecoration allowance is due if a fault with the property or work carried out by the Association has damaged your decoration in such a way that it cannot easily be repaired. No allowance is due if prompt reporting of the problem would have prevented it.

The amount of the allowance varies from room to room and is set by the Department for Communities. It is paid on completion of the work.

Damage to tenant's property

If furnishings or personal items are damaged as a result of a fault in your home:

- which Grove has repair responsibilities for, or
- through the fault of Grove's contractor, the Association will decide on action appropriate to the specific circumstances.

Disturbance

A Disturbance Allowance will be paid if you are unable to use a room or rooms in your

home for which there is no alternative, e.g. your kitchen or bathroom.

The work must have lasted at least 7 days to qualify and either there must be no suitable alternative dwelling for you to move into or you have asked to stay in your own home.

Payments will be at the levels set by the Department for Communities.

Continuous Disruption

This applies if for at least 2 weeks you have suffered continuous disruption to a room or rooms, which would not be bad enough for a Disturbance payment but has meant that the room or rooms have not been available for normal use.

Payments will start after 2 weeks and for each complete week of disruption after. The amount will be half the Disturbance allowance set by the Department for Communities.

Failure to Carry Out Certain Urgent Repairs

For this to apply:

1. The repair has to be one that is likely to jeopardize your health or safety if not carried out quickly.
2. The cost is under £250.
3. The repair has not been carried out within twice the Association's normal time for the type of repair (i.e. 48 hours for emergencies and 8 working days for urgent repairs).
4. There are no exceptional circumstances beyond the control of the Association preventing the repair being carried out, such as having to order a boiler part.

Compensation is £10 for the first day and £2 for each day after up to a limit of £50.

Improvement Compensation

If you make certain improvements to your home, such as new kitchen or bathroom fittings, the Association will pay you some money when you leave. Details must be agreed with the Association before the work is done.

The amount will depend on the table showing how long the improvement would be expected to last after you have moved.

Your Repair Responsibilities

There are a number of repairs that tenants are responsible for, though Grove will take account of fair wear and tear and each tenant's capability.

Generally:

- Minor items that can reasonably be carried out by you.
- Anything you have constructed or provided that the Association has not agreed to take responsibility for.
- Making good damage wilfully or negligently caused by you, your household or visitors.

Electrical items:

- Bulbs, plugs, fluorescent tubes and starters.
- Repairs to electrical appliances and light fittings not installed by or accepted for maintenance by the Association.
- Fuses, except main fuses which NIE look after.
- Re-setting trip switches.
- Testing smoke and heat detectors.

Plumbing:

- Cleaning out gully traps, and blockages at sinks, baths, basins and WC's.
- Stoppers and chains.
- WC seat and fittings.
- Plumbing in washing machines etc.

Heating:

- Bleeding air from radiators.
- Setting time clocks.
- Re-setting gas meters or oil boilers if they run out of fuel.

Doors and windows:

- Oiling and tightening screws to hinges, locks and handles.
- Replacing lost keys and replacing locks if you lose your keys.
- Replacing broken glass, unless you show it was nothing to do with you, your household or visitors.



(Your Repair Responsibilities continued)**Decoration:**

- Keeping the inside in reasonable decorative order.
- Minor internal wall or ceiling cracks.

Outside:

- Care and upkeep of gardens, paving, hard standing for cars etc.

Other:

- Replacing refuse bins and whirly lines
- Curtain rails and coat hooks.
- Cleaning & maintenance of fixtures & fittings normally done by the user.

Note: this list is not exhaustive.

Grove's Repair Responsibilities**The structure and exterior**

- This includes keeping in good repair the walls, roof, external painting, gutters, drains, doors frames and locks, windows, skirting, plasterwork etc.

Maintaining installations

- Keeping in good repair and working order any installations provided by the Association for space heating, water heating, sanitation, washing and for the supply of water, electricity, gas and oil.

Common parts

- For flats, keeping in reasonable repair any common entrances, halls or stairs.

Note: this list is also not exhaustive.

Repairs and Rent Arrears

Grove is not under any duty to carry out non-essential repairs if you are four weeks or more in arrears. If however you have these arrears but are paying them off on a regular basis, Grove will acknowledge this by doing these repairs.

Security

About 40% of burglaries happen because doors and windows have not been locked. Let us know if you are having any problems with your locks.

Improvements, Additions and Alterations

Grove will carry out improvements such as renewing heating boilers, kitchen units, doors and bathroom suites when they have reached the end of their useful lives.

You need to ask us for permission to put sheds or other structures outside. You also need our permission for modification work inside such as any structural alterations, or changing existing doors, windows, kitchen units, worktops, bathroom suites, wall tiles or kitchen or bathroom vinyl.

The Association will not withhold permission unreasonably, but we want to make sure that what you do does not cause us problems later, such as having to fix what you have done if you end your tenancy.

Adaptations for Disabled People

The Association will carry out adaptations for a disabled person if a recommendation is received from an Occupational Therapist.

If the adaptation is straight forward and costs less than £1,000 we can proceed without an Occupational Therapist's request.

Adaptation examples are:

- installing a shower
- installing a lift
- fitting an additional stair rail
- fitting grab rails
- installing an intercom
- Fitting lever taps



Out of Gas or Oil? No Electricity?

Funds for maintenance are limited. We want to hear about and fix genuine faults, but please note that we may ask for repayment of unnecessary costs.

Run out of oil?

The oil companies may bleed the system to remove any airlock if you ask them when they are delivering oil.

Run out of gas?

Use the following instructions:

- Put money/credit on the card
- Insert the card into the meter
- Press and hold the black button (B) until the display says 'LET GO'
- Press the reset button on the boiler.

Electricity gone off?

Check the following before calling the office:

- Is there credit in the meter?
- Has a trip switch turned off? If so, unplug appliances, put the trip switch on and plug in appliances one by one to see if any has a fault and trips the switch again. If lights are off, please note that a bulb blowing can sometimes trip the switch.
- Check if neighbours have no electricity. If this is the case, contact NIE.
- If a repair is our responsibility, call us.

Smoke Alarms

Please test these regularly. If there is a fault, please let us know rather than ignore it or disable the alarm.

Water Leaks

If you think a water pipe is leaking please contact us. Put a container under the leak.

If it is a hot or cold pipe for the bath, WC, sink or basin and it is a serious problem, turn off the mains stopcock by turning it clockwise. It is usually under your kitchen sink.

If the leak continues and you have a cold water storage tank in your roof space or attic, turn the bath and basin cold taps on to drain this. If the leak is warm water, you may need to turn on the hot taps to drain the hot water

5.

cylinder as well. If you have done this, you must not try to heat any more hot water. If the leak seems to be coming from the heating system, turn it off and wait for our plumbers.

Gas Leaks

If you think gas is leaking:

1. Open your windows.
2. Check if a gas appliance has been left on and if so, turn it off.
3. If you suspect a leak, turn off the gas supply at the meter. The gas is off when the red handle is at 90° to the pipe.
4. Do not smoke or light any flames. Do not use any electric switches as they can spark. Phone from a room where you do not smell gas.
4. Contact the Association or the Phoenix Gas emergency number 0800 002 001.

Please note that only "Gas Safe" registered engineers can by law to install or service any gas appliances. A list of engineers is available on www.gassaferegister.co.uk or phone 0800 408 5500. Grove has boilers serviced annually.

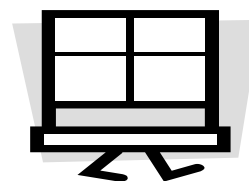
Gas Cookers

These must be installed and serviced by Gas Safe registered engineers. For cookers, this is a tenant's responsibility.

In Case of Fire

1. Get everyone out and close all doors and windows to stop the fire and smoke from spreading.
2. Raise the alarm and warn neighbours.
3. Call the fire service and give your name and address.
4. Do not go back into the dwelling.

Escape Windows



You will have at least one window upstairs that opens wider than others and is an escape window in case of fire. Please check regularly that this opens properly and do not block access to it with furniture.

Heating Controls

If you have a gas or oil boiler, you have heating controls which help you keep the house at the temperature you want. They can also save you money.

Time clock: if you have a hot water cylinder this allows you to have the central heating or the hot water on, or both. You can set the times they come on, or turn them on and off yourself. If you have a “combi” boiler, the clock just controls the central heating and the boiler only heats water when you turn the hot tap on. Please use the time clock controls and do not turn the power supply to the boiler on and off as this damages it.

Wall thermostat: this is usually on the wall in your hall or living room. If your home comes up to the temperature you have it set at, the boiler will turn off until the temperature cools again. If you turn it down too much, your heating will not come on at all. You can try and see what temperature suits you best.

Thermostatic radiator valves: you have these on all radiators, or all but one. They allow you to control the temperature of each room.

Frost Protection

If no one will be at home, provide some background heat during a cold spell. If you will be away for some time, you may want to turn off the mains stopcock and drain any tanks as described under “Water Leaks”.

Condensation

Condensation occurs when moist air reaches a cold surface and deposits some of its water content on the surface. It can look like dampness and it may lead to mould growth. There are however some ways to reduce it:

- Keep the trickle vents at the top of your windows open as much as possible.
- Open your windows at least some time during the day to air each room.
- Use your extractor fans when cooking, bathing or showering.
- Heat the house – air can hold more humidity if it is warm.
- If drying clothes inside the home, heat and ventilate that area.

RENT

Ways of Paying Rent

The following choices are available for paying rent to the Association:

- ALLPAY card that you can use in various shops or the Post Office.
- Direct Debit. We can help you set this up.
- Exceptionally a cheque or cash at the office to pay rent arrears.

Setting Rents

Our basic rent is set on a points basis, similar to the Housing Executive. Points are awarded according to the age and type of property, the number and size of rooms and the facilities such as heating. E.g. at the time of printing a terraced house attracts 8 points, a living room 3 and a single bedroom 2. For our newer property, we then add points to cover loan repayments on the money borrowed to help build the homes. This makes the rent higher than the Executive’s.

The Department for Communities advises the cost of each point, which Grove usually follows. So if your house has 40 points and the cost per point is £1.80, the rent is $40 \times £1.80 = £72.00$. If you want to know how the rent is calculated for your home, please contact us.

Your rates are set by government and the City Council. Any service charge for flats is set to cover our costs such as for communal lighting and cleaning.

Rent and rates increases take effect at the start of April each year.



If you Fall Behind with Rent

If you have fallen behind or think that you are going to, please contact us as soon as possible. We may be able to offer advice or put you in touch with those who can.

If you have rent arrears, we will contact you and ask you to arrange payment. We may accept an agreement to clear them by payment of regular instalments along with your rent.

If you are a Secure Tenant and you are not clearing the arrears we may:

- Apply for direct deductions from social security benefits.
- Seek to recover the debt through the Small Claims Court.
- Seek an order from the County Court for debt and to evict you from your home.

If you are an Introductory Tenant, it is easier for us to end your tenancy due to rent arrears.

Housing Benefit

It is your responsibility to claim any Housing Benefit due to you but we will assist you if required. Applications are made to the Housing Executive and it is most important that you provide them with whatever information they ask for. Their address is:

Housing Benefit
32-36 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7BA
Telephone: 03448 920 902

If you do not provide the necessary forms and information promptly, you may lose your Benefit entitlement and we will therefore ask you to pay the rent owed to us yourself.



YOUR TENANTS' RIGHTS

This section explains more fully than your Tenancy Agreement the legal rights you have as a tenant of Grove Community Housing Association.

Introductory Tenancies

On becoming a tenant of the Association you will have an Introductory Tenancy unless you are transferring your tenancy from the

7.

Housing Executive or a registered housing association and you already had a Secure Tenancy with them. As an Introductory Tenant you have more limited rights and it allows you to prove over a 12 month period that you can abide by the terms of your Tenancy Agreement. If there have been no problems, you will automatically become a Secure Tenant.

As an Introductory Tenant, a family member may be able to succeed to the tenancy if you die and the tenancy may be assigned by a court order. Details of these rights are included on the next page.

If you have built up serious rent arrears or if you, your household or your visitors have been guilty of anti-social behaviour, there are procedures Grove can follow to end your tenancy.

- We will give you at least 28 days notice that we are seeking possession of your house and the reasons for this action. We will also tell you where you may go to get help or advice.
- If you want us to review this decision, you have to ask within 14 days. You can put your case to the Association.
- If Grove decides it should continue with the eviction, we apply to the Court for a possession order. The Court checks to see if we have followed the correct procedure, but cannot look into the reasons for the decision.

Secure Tenancies

Most Grove Community Housing Association tenants are already Secure Tenants and Introductory Tenants will become Secure after 12 months unless the Association seeks possession of your home as outlined in the section above. Being a Secure Tenant means that we cannot seek to evict you without a full court hearing. You must occupy your dwelling as your only or principle home and the grounds on which we could take you to court are outlined in your Tenancy Agreement. This tenancy type also gives you more rights than an Introductory Tenancy.

Your rights are detailed on the next pages:

Succession

The right to succession on death of the tenant only applies once. However if there are special circumstances we may agree to give a further tenancy agreement. If an Introductory Tenant dies, the successor will become an Introductory Tenant, not a Secure Tenant.

The application for succession to a tenancy may be granted in the following circumstances:

- The applicant is the husband, wife or civil partner of the deceased tenant.
- The applicant was the deceased tenant's partner or is a member of the family and can prove they have lived there as their principal home for over 12 months.
- The applicant is a carer who has given up a tenancy or licence or sold their home in order to live with and care for the tenant who has then died. (Where the applicant was renting accommodation from a relative, he or she will not be eligible to succeed.)
- The applicant has accepted responsibility for the deceased tenant's dependants.

If you succeed to a tenancy you will not be entitled to new tenancy repairs. Your rights and entitlements about buying the dwelling will be based on the deceased tenant's rights, but only arise after you have been a social housing tenant here or elsewhere for at least 5 years.

Joint Tenancies

A joint tenancy creates equal rights and obligations for each tenant. A request for a joint tenancy may only be granted to eligible people in the following circumstances:

The proposed joint tenant:

- Is your husband, wife or civil partner.
- Would at the date of application be entitled to succeed to the sole tenancy if the existing tenant dies.
- Was part of the current tenant's household when the current tenant was awarded the tenancy, or
- The current tenant and the proposed joint tenant have been living as part of the same household for at least one year.

Assignment

Assigning your tenancy means transferring your rights to another person. The Association is legally obliged to consent to an assignment if:

- A Court orders an assignment as part of family law litigation.
- You have a legal right to an exchange.

Where there is no legal entitlement, Grove may allow an assignment in exceptional circumstances, for example in situations in which it would not be practicable for the existing tenant to act as the tenant.

Lodgers

A lodger is someone who lives with you but was not part of your household when you first moved in. Secure tenants have the right to take in lodgers, however any extra income you may get from your lodger may affect benefit entitlement.

Subletting

With our permission, you may sublet part of your home, but not all of it. This means giving up possession of that part of the home to your sub-tenant. We will need details of your proposals and doing this may also affect benefit entitlement.

Exchanges

You may exchange your home with another Secure Tenant of a registered housing association or the Housing Executive, provided both landlords agree in advance.

Improvements

You may carry out alterations and improvements, but you have to provide details and ask our permission. (See page 4 for details.)

Information

You have a right to information from Grove about:

- The terms of your tenancy and the arrangements for varying them.
- The Association's repairing obligations and its policies and procedures on tenant consultation, housing allocation and transfers and exchanges.
- The right under the Data Protection Act to check the information we hold about you.

Consultation

You have the right to be consulted about any changes in the terms of your Tenancy Agreement or any housing management proposals which are likely to have a substantial effect on you. Your rent charges can be increased without consultation but we will give you notice of the changes.

Right to buy your home

Most tenants have the right to buy their home from us under whatever terms are laid down by the Department for Communities at the time they apply to purchase. The Association will provide details of current terms on request.



TENANTS' OBLIGATIONS

These are detailed in your Tenancy Agreement and include:

- Keeping possession of your home.
- Using it as your only or principal home.
- Paying the rent and other charges.
- Acting responsibly and not being a nuisance to others.
- Not parking anything in a way that is awkward for your neighbours.
- Keeping your home in good condition and doing whatever repairs you are responsible for.
- Reporting necessary repairs to Grove.
- Allowing access for inspection and repairs.
- Abiding by Planning and Building Control rules.
- Using reasonably any areas you share with others.
- Not to overcrowding your home.
- Getting our permission for more than one pet in a house and any pet in a flat.
- Not keeping LPG gas or paraffin in flats.
- Paying to replace any lost keys.
- Asking our permission for additions and alterations to your home.
- Giving us 4 weeks' notice of ending your tenancy, leaving the dwelling clean, having furniture cleared and returning the keys.

OTHER TENANCY INFORMATION

Becoming a Shareholder of the Association

Becoming a member of the Association is open to any adult who:

- Applies to the Association. We have an application form.
- Pays the £1 for the share.
- Is accepted as a member by the Board.

Shareholders can be nominated or nominate other shareholders to fill vacancies on the Board. They will be invited to Annual or Special General Meetings, can put forward resolutions and vote on all business there.

Your Right to Know

Under the "Tenants' Guarantee" we are expected to have certain information about how we do our job as a Landlord. Facts and figures are collected which may be of interest to you as a tenant, including:

- the rents we charge
- how quickly we carry out repairs
- how we do in collecting rent due
- empty properties
- what categories of people we have let homes to and how quickly.

This information is circulated to tenants each year but you may also ask for a copy.

Contents Insurance

The Association has "buildings" insurance to provide insurance cover for the structure of your home. It is your responsibility to provide "contents" insurance cover for your personal property and furnishings.

Home insurance policies vary a lot. You should at least get cover against fire, flood and theft. If you pay a higher premium you can add for example accidental damage cover. It is worth getting more than one quote.

Giving up your Tenancy

If you decide to move, the Association legally requires at least 4 weeks' notice ending on a Monday. Less notice may be accepted if circumstances mean that 4 weeks is not reasonable.

Staff will arrange with you to inspect the house before you leave. Rent should also be paid up and the house left cleared and clean.

Damage other than wear and tear may be charged to you and the cost of clearing furniture and rubbish may also be charged.

Please be aware that the tenancy and rent does not end until you hand in the keys.

Transfers

The Association will try to help if you want to transfer to another home we own, to a different housing association or to a Housing Executive dwelling. The following rules apply:

1. Unless you can make a strong case for exceptional circumstances, transfers will not be allowed within 2 years from the start of a tenancy.
2. All transfer applicants have to be assessed and put on the joint housing association and Housing Executive computerised waiting list. Those with more than 4 weeks rent arrears will not be considered unless they are Full Duty Applicants under the homelessness rules. Points are awarded for transfer applicants.
3. Particularly urgent cases may be classed as "Management Transfers" which gives Grove some limited discretion to give them priority.

Exchanges

Exchanges can be made with Housing Executive or housing association tenants who have been tenants for a year and:

- The sizes of the dwellings are suitable for both families.
- There are no difficulties with rent arrears.
- The person who wants to move in has kept their existing house reasonably clean and tidy.

- You take on each other's homes as they are. Grove will not be doing a change of tenancy inspection and repairs.
- Both landlords know in advance and agree to the exchange in writing before it takes place. (Without agreement you become a squatter.)

In exchanges, each tenant takes on both the terms and conditions of tenancy and the rent of the dwelling they are moving into.

Buying your Home

The House Sales Scheme is laid down by the Department for Communities and it is changed from time to time. The general principles of the scheme are:

- Most of Grove's dwellings may be purchased by their tenants.
- The tenant must have been a tenant of a housing association or the Housing Executive for a number of years.
- The house is sold for the current market value less any discount due but subject to the "historic cost" rule.

If you are interested, please ask the Association for its guidance leaflet.

Energy Saving Tips

- Some methods of paying for your energy may be cheaper, e.g. Direct Debit.
- Use your wall thermostat, thermostatic radiator valves and your time clock to control when you need heat and hot water.
- Make sure radiators are not obstructed by furniture or curtains.
- Use energy efficient light bulbs and turn lights off when not needed.
- Appliances left on standby use electricity, so turn them off.
- Defrost fridges and freezers regularly and do not put warm food into them.
- Use a pan the same size as the cooker ring and using a lid speeds heating.
- Use lower temperatures to wash clothes.
- Dry clothes outside when you can, rather than using a tumble dryer.
- Boil only as much water in your kettle as you will need.

- If you have a shower in your home, it generally uses less hot water than a bath.

Tenant Participation

We hope that you want to be involved in the management of your home and in the services provided by us. To help with this:

- We provide you with information through this handbook, your Tenancy Agreement and newsletters. You may also ask us for information.
- Tenants may serve on the Board and we welcome any tenants or residents groups.
- We consult you through surveys and requests for feedback on particular issues.
- We welcome suggestions from you on any issues relating to your tenancy.



Noise and Nuisance

Under the terms of your Tenancy Agreement, you should both be able to occupy your home in peace and should not be a nuisance to your neighbours.

If other tenants of the Association or their household or visitors are troubling you and you agree, we will remind them of their tenancy obligations. If other means fail and evidence can be produced, the Association can ask the court for an eviction order.

Police may also be able to help. Even if they are not able to do anything at once, the fact that they have logged and confirmed a complaint can be used as evidence in court. The Belfast PSNI number is 0845 600 8000.

Regarding excessive noise, the City Council noise control officers also have the authority to seize equipment, issue Noise Abatement Notices and on-the-spot fines, and bring prosecutions in the Courts. They are available during office hours and they have a night time service between 8pm and 4am. Their number is 028 9037 3006.

COMPLAINTS

What is a Complaint?

Informal complaints or requests would include such things as reminding us that a repair had not been done. Normally we would just discuss it with you informally, take a note of the matter and take appropriate action.

Formal complaints will be complaints about our standard of service or decisions we have made where you want a formal assessment and normally a written response.

Neighbour nuisance and anti-social behaviour will be dealt with under separate procedures as they are complaints about the behaviour of other people, not our service. If however you consider that we are not taking appropriate action, you may make a formal complaint about the standard of service we are providing.

FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1. Tell us about your complaint

It is helpful if you fill in our complaint form but you may also report your complaint verbally. Our contact details are on the front page. Your complaint will be logged into the Complaints Book and a file opened.

Stage 2. Action by the relevant staff member

The appropriate staff member for the complaint will investigate the matter and respond within 5 working days. If it is going to take longer than this to investigate, we will acknowledge the complaint and let you know when a full response can be given.

Stage 3. Review by the General Manager

If you are not satisfied with the response you have received, let us know. The matter will be reviewed by the General Manager and a reply sent within 10 working days.



Stage 4. Review by the Management Committee

If you are not satisfied with the General Manager's response, you can ask for a review by the Board. If the next meeting is too far away for you, the General Manager will discuss the complaint with the Chairman and come back to you with proposals. You may also put your complaint to the Board in person.

Stage 5. Review by the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman

Tenants can bring complaints about the Association to the Ombudsman. He or she normally expects a tenant to have used the Association's internal complaints procedure before bringing a complaint. Contact details are as follows:

For letters: NI Public Services Ombudsman, Freepost NIPSO
 Visiting office: Progressive House, 33 Wellington Place, Belfast BT1 6HN
 Opening hours: 9.30am - 5.00pm Monday to Friday
 Telephone: 0800 34 34 24 (Freephone) 028 9023 3821 (Switchboard)
 E-mail: nipso@nipso.org.uk
 Website: www.nipso.org.uk



Anti-Social Behaviour

Every individual is entitled to live in peace within their neighbourhood so we want to help address the problem of Anti-Social Behaviour.

We will:

- Formally acknowledge all reports of Anti-Social Behaviour within 5 working days;
- Investigate all reported instances of Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Provide advice and support;
- Identify and interview all concerned;
- Establish inter agency working where appropriate;

- Use legal action when all efforts at conciliation have failed. This may include possession, injunction and/or making an application to the relevant authorities for an Anti-Social Behaviour Order,
- Try to take action on behalf of our own tenants who may be the victims of Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Try to respond to Anti-Social Behaviour on any land owned by us, whoever complains to us.
- We will take account of any anti-social behaviour carried out by anyone we know of who has made an application for re-housing.

Please ask us if you want a full copy of any of our policies.

USEFUL NUMBERS



| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Grove Community Housing Association | 028 9077 3330 |
| Emergency repairs | 0800 731 3081 |
| Gas Leaks: | 0800 002 001 |
| Electricity supply faults | 03457 643 643 |
| NI Water – emergency/flood | 03457 440 088 |
| Police - emergency | 999 |
| Police – non-emergency | 101 |
| Crimestoppers | 0800 555111 |
| Housing Benefit | 03448 920 902 |
| Housing Executive | 03448 020 900 |
| <u>Belfast City Council</u> | |
| Noise Hotline | 028 9037 3006 |
| Anti-social behaviour officer | 028 9027 0469 |
| Waste collection | 028 9027 0230 |
| Reporting dog fouling | 028 9027 0431 |
| Citizens Advice NI | 028 9064 1120 |
| Housing Rights Service | 028 9024 5640 |
| Women's Aid Helpline | 0808 802 1414 |

Grove - Providing quality affordable homes in the Grove area and improving the standard of life in the community.

