

## **About Mount Green**

Welcome to Mount Green Housing Association. We are a medium-sized housing association with around 850 affordable homes for rent and shared ownership in Surrey and Kent. This handbook gives you some helpful information about your tenancy and your home, plus summaries of our relevant policies. We hope you will find it helpful.

## **What is a Housing Association?**

Housing Associations are independent organisations, which receive money from the government to help them build and let affordable homes. Housing association tenants can be nominated either by local councils or from the association's own waiting list if they have one. Mount Green operates a waiting list for some areas.

Housing Associations have a board of management made up of volunteers with overall responsibility for the work of the organisation. Our Board includes professional and business people and a tenant representative. The Board is supported by a number of committees which have tenant representatives.

## **How to contact us**

Please do contact us if you have a query or need any help. Our office hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. During office hours you can contact us by telephoning 01372 379555. You can also send a fax or email, the details of which can be found in section 4. If you need an emergency repair outside of office hours please call 01372 819092, or pull your alarm cord if you live in sheltered housing.

You can also write to us at the address in section 4. All general enquiries will be acknowledged within 4 working days and answered within 20 working days.

You can also arrange to meet one of our staff. To save a wasted journey, please contact us first to arrange an appointment. If you would like to be visited in your home please call us to arrange a time for one of our staff to visit.

## **Our commitment to you**

We aim to provide you with a high quality service. We care about what you think and want to hear if you are not happy. If you have a complaint please let us know. We try to deal with complaints quickly. Most are sorted out immediately or in only a few days. If you are still unhappy you can make an official complaint using our complaints procedure (see section 3).

## **About your tenancy**

There are three types of tenancy and it is important to know which one you have.

- If you became a Mount Green tenant before 15 January 1989 you will be a secure tenant. Rents for secure tenants are reviewed every two years by the Government's rent officer, who sets an upper limit on rent levels.
- If you became a tenant after 15 January 1989 you will either be an assured or an assured shorthold tenant. Rents for assured and assured shorthold tenants are reviewed each year by Mount Green.

Because rents change at different times you may find that you are paying more (or less) than someone else in a similar home. Your tenancy agreement (which you will have signed before being handed the keys) contains full details of the terms of your tenancy.

Please let us know if there are any changes to your household such as an addition to the family or if your contact details change.

## **Data Protection**

We are registered under the Data Protection Act 1998 and follow the requirements laid down by the Act.

## **Paying your rent**

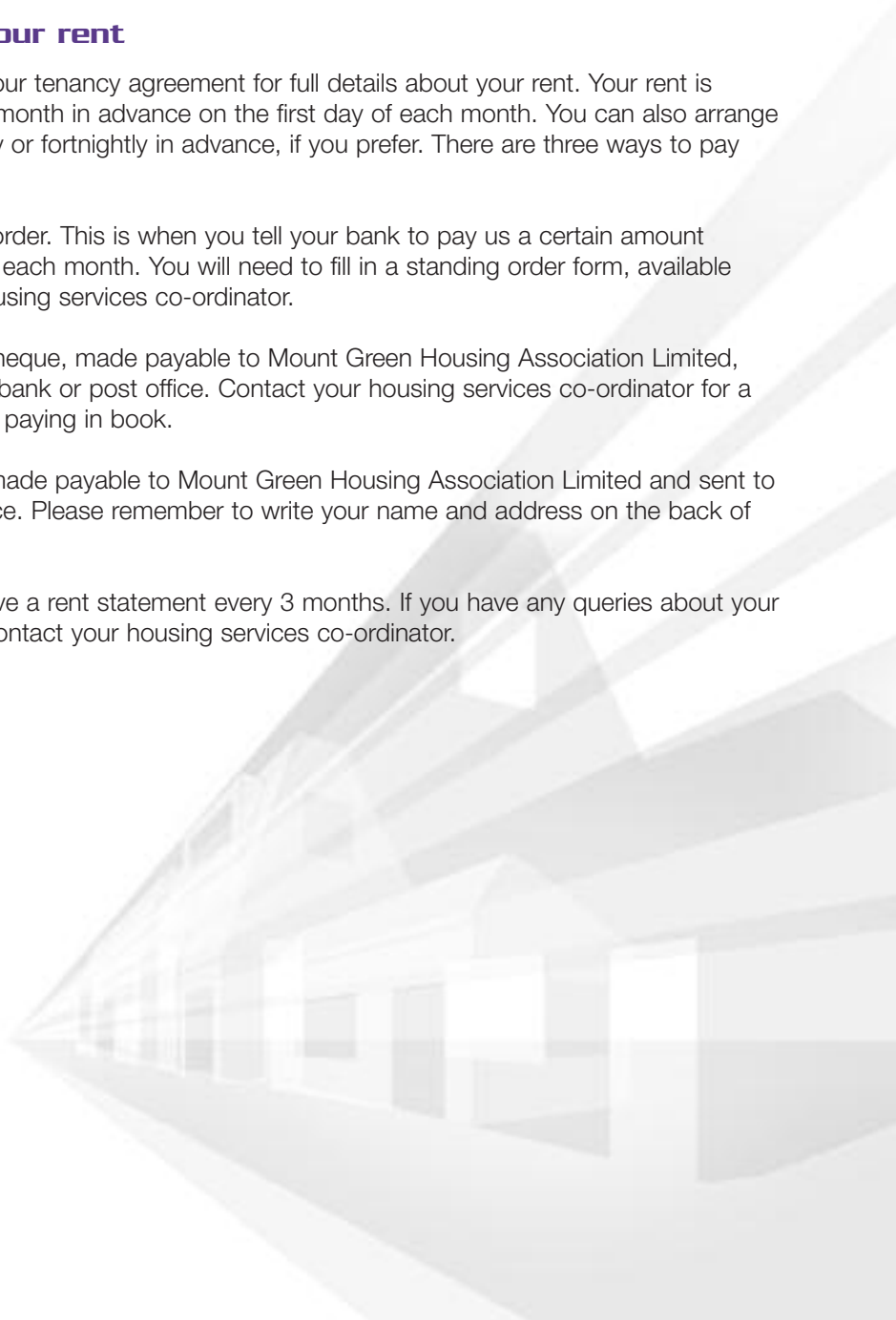
Please see your tenancy agreement for full details about your rent. Your rent is payable one month in advance on the first day of each month. You can also arrange to pay weekly or fortnightly in advance, if you prefer. There are three ways to pay your rent:

By standing order. This is when you tell your bank to pay us a certain amount automatically each month. You will need to fill in a standing order form, available from your housing services co-ordinator.

By cash or cheque, made payable to Mount Green Housing Association Limited, paid into the bank or post office. Contact your housing services co-ordinator for a Mount Green paying in book.

By cheque, made payable to Mount Green Housing Association Limited and sent to our head office. Please remember to write your name and address on the back of the cheque.

You will receive a rent statement every 3 months. If you have any queries about your rent please contact your housing services co-ordinator.



## **Service charges**

If you live on an estate or in sheltered housing your rent will include a service charge. This pays for services such as caretaking, lifts and the upkeep of communal areas. Your tenancy agreement will clearly show if your rent includes a service charge.

## **Housing benefit**

If you have a low income you may be able to claim Housing Benefit to help pay your rent and council tax. Please contact the Housing Benefit office direct with queries and applications.

## **Supporting People**

Supporting People, the new Government programme for funding of support services, such as those provided by scheme managers, came into effect in April 2003.

If you claim housing benefit and receive support from a scheme manager, supporting people will pay for the support service that you receive. If you are not in receipt of housing benefit, you may still be able to get help. For information on who to contact, speak to your housing services co-ordinator.

You may also qualify for other benefits. Details of the different benefits are available from the Department of Social Security (DSS) or from Post Offices or your nearest Citizens' Advice Bureau.

## **What if my circumstances change?'**

If your circumstances change (e.g. if you become sick, unable to work, are made redundant, or return to work) this may also change your entitlement to housing benefit (see above). You must tell Mount Green and also write to your local authority housing benefits department. Please keep a copy of the letter.

Please let us know if you change your telephone number or if there are any changes to your household.

## **Paying bills**

You are responsible for paying your council tax and for gas, water, electricity and telephone bills. These services are not included in your rent.

## **Insuring your possessions**

Mount Green has arranged for the insurance of your building, all equipment and fixtures owned by Mount Green, but we do not insure the contents of your home (e.g. your furniture, your electrical equipment, your valuables and internal decoration). We strongly advise that you take out insurance to cover the loss, theft or damage to your possessions.

## **Tenant Participation**

There are a number of different ways in which you can be involved in making the decisions which affect your home, estate, or the organisation as a whole. You may be asked to complete a survey, invited to attend a residents meeting or join a focus group to look at a particular issue. There is also an opportunity for residents to become members of the residents' forum, the management committees and the Board of Mount Green. If you would like more information, contact the Tenant Participation Co-ordinator.

## **Residents' associations and social committees**

Several of our estates and housing schemes have residents' associations. These are groups of residents who meet regularly to look at issues affecting where they live and to help tenants to influence the management of their homes. They are also a good way to build community spirit and work together to improve the neighbourhood.

Some estates and schemes also have social committees, who arrange events for the benefit of residents. To find out if your estate or scheme has a residents association or social committee or maybe start one up, please contact head office. If you live on a sheltered scheme you can also speak to your scheme manager.

## **Home exchanges and transfers**

If you want to move you may be able to transfer to a different home. However, there are long waiting lists for transfers and it will not be possible for everyone. Another option may be a home exchange. This is where you swap your home for a different one somewhere else in the country, or even just down the road! If you are interested in finding out more about transfers or home exchanges then see Allocations and Transfers in section 3, or contact us at Mount Green.

## **Anti social behaviour**

Mount Green is committed to zero tolerance of anti social behaviour. Nuisance and harassment or violence of any kind, whether directed at other tenants or any of our staff, will not be tolerated.

Please be considerate of your neighbours and do not make excessive noise which may cause a nuisance to those living close to you. TVs, stereos etc. are to be kept at reasonable levels

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children do not cause a nuisance to those living in the vicinity

Few of our tenants report any problems, however do tell us if you are at all concerned. Most incidents can be sorted out very easily. We take reports of anti social behaviour very seriously. There are now laws in force which may allow us to take action against people who disturb or harass their neighbours, so please do contact us and let us know what is happening. See also Anti Social Behaviour in section 3.

## **Ending your tenancy**

If you intend to leave your home you must give at least one month's notice. During that month we may need to gain access to your home to allow potential new tenants to view the property. At the end of your tenancy the property must be cleared of all possessions, cleaned and your keys handed back. Please see your tenancy agreement for full details. You must also tell the utility companies (e.g. for gas, electricity and water) and the council tax department of your local authority.

## How to arrange a repair

During office hours you can request a repair by calling our freephone number 0800 389 7219. If you live on a sheltered scheme you can report the repair to your sheltered scheme manager.

Outside office hours you can request an emergency repair by calling 01372 819092, or by pulling your alarm cord if you live in sheltered housing.

We may need to inspect the problem first or ask a contractor to carry out the work straight away. We will send you a copy of the repair order, which will also tell you the name of the contractor who will do the work and the date that it should be completed by. The contractor will then contact you separately to arrange a time that is mutually convenient. Please make sure there is someone to let the contractor in. If you are unable to keep the appointment, please let the contractor know, otherwise you will be charged for a missed appointment.

If the repair is not completed by the date shown on the repair order form, please let us know.

## How long will repairs take?

We give priority to the most urgent repairs. This means that non-urgent repairs may have to wait a little longer. To give you an idea of the waiting times we have set targets. Each month we monitor the contractors' performance to see how well they are doing.

***Emergency repairs will normally be completed within 24 hours, or at least made safe. Emergency repairs include:***

- serious water leak inside your home
- insecure ground floor window or external door
- serious electrical fault
- complete breakdown of heating system 1st October - 31st March
- blocked toilet (where no other toilet available) or drain
- broken window or door glass

***Urgent repairs will normally be completed within five working days.***

***Urgent repairs include:***

- heating 1st April - 30th September
- loss of hot water
- minor electrical faults
- door entry system

***Routine repairs will normally be completed within 15 working days.***

***Routine repairs include:***

- garage doors
- leaking store or garage roof
- level uneven paving slabs
- guttering

***Non routine repairs will normally be completed within 28 days.***

***Non routine repairs include:***

- fencing
- repairs to brickwork and walls
- minor roofing repairs

## **Can I carry out a repair myself?**

No, we will arrange for all repairs to be carried out by one of our contractors.

## **Damage to Mount Green Property**

If you damage property belonging to Mount Green you will either be charged for the repair or replacement of the item.

## **Emergencies**

In an emergency you may need to take action before contacting Mount Green.

### **Fire**

In the event of fire you should dial 999 immediately and ask for the fire brigade. If you are in sheltered housing and the fire is not in your flat, you should stay in your flat until the fire brigade come and get you. Your scheme manager will have explained the evacuation procedure to you but if you are not sure what to do, then do please ask. If you do not live in sheltered housing, get everyone out and do not go back for any reason.

### **If you smell gas**

- Open all doors and windows.
- Check that you have not left a gas appliance on, or that a pilot light has not blown out. If you have left an appliance on, turn it off and do not try to relight it until the smell of gas has been cleared from the property.
- If you think there is a gas leak call Transco immediately on 0800 111999. If you are deaf or hard of hearing call 0800 371787.
- Do not smoke, use matches or a naked flame or use electric switches.

If there is a gas leak, please let us know as soon as possible.

## **Burst or leaking pipe**

- Turn the water off at the mains.
- If electrics are affected, turn off the electricity at the consumer unit.
- Call our repairs service. If it is out of office hours, call the emergency number.

## **Loss of electricity**

- If your neighbours are also affected, call your electricity supplier. Otherwise see the advice in section 4.
- If the problem persists after following the advice, call our repairs service. If it is out of office hours, call the emergency number.

Make sure you know how to turn off the water, gas and electricity supply to your home. In an emergency you may need to turn them off quickly. If you are not sure how to do this please ask your caretaker, scheme manager or housing services co-ordinator.

## **Your right to repair**

If you tell us about a repair and we fail to fix it within the specified time, please let us know. If the repair is not done after the second target date, you may be entitled to some compensation. If you think you may be entitled to claim, please contact our repairs and maintenance team.

## **Alterations and Additions**

If you want to fit extra shelves or cupboards, or make other minor alterations or additions to your home, please let us know in advance. You must tell us in writing and supply drawings or plans. We will then write to confirm you can go ahead, or to explain why it is not possible. All work must be carried out to a good standard. When you end your tenancy you may be asked to remove the shelves, cupboards or other items you have installed and make good the area.

## **Decoration**

You are responsible for keeping your home in good decorative order. When you end your tenancy you must make sure your home is decorated to a reasonable standard. This means making sure that the paintwork is in reasonable condition and any holes in the walls (eg where you have taken down shelves) have been filled and smoothed over. If you leave your home in a condition where it needs redecoration you may be asked to pay for the cost of the work. Exterior decoration and communal areas will be maintained by Mount Green.

## **Improving your home**

If you want to improve your home (e.g. fit a new bathroom or kitchen) you may be able to get some compensation for the cost of the work. You must tell us in writing before you start and get your plans approved first. If you are entitled to compensation for the cost of improving your home we will pay this at the end of your tenancy. The amount of compensation will depend on what you do and how long you live there after you complete the improvement. For further details contact your Housing Services Co-ordinator.

## **Home loss and disturbance**

From time to time we may need to carry out major improvements or in some cases redevelopment of our properties. Where it is necessary for you to leave your home, even for a short time, we will arrange alternative accommodation for you and compensate you for the disturbance (see Home Loss and Disturbance in section 3).

## **Heating and hot water**

Please make sure you know how to use your heating system. If you have any queries feel free to contact us.

If you have a gas boiler, you must allow access for us to service the boiler annually.

Paraffin or Calor gas heaters are not allowed. They produce too much condensation and are a fire risk. Advice on how to reduce condensation in your home can be found in section 4.

## **Caretaking service**

If you live on one of our estates you will have a caretaker to keep the estate clean and tidy and maintain the communal areas and gardens. Our caretakers work from Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm. You will have been told how to contact your caretaker at the start of your tenancy. Please respect their privacy outside office hours. If you need to speak to someone in an emergency outside office hours please call 01372 819092.

## **Your responsibilities**

**All our homes are let as 'unfurnished'. This means that you are responsible for:**

- reporting repairs to Mount Green
- making sure we have access to inspect and carry out repairs
- carpets and floor coverings (except kitchens and bathrooms)
- internal decoration (see Decoration above)
- plumbing not installed by us (e.g. for a dishwasher or washing machine).

**You are also responsible for:**

- cleaning windows (except to communal areas)
- keys (we do not have spares so if you lose your keys you will need to call a locksmith)
- damage caused by carelessness or misuse (e.g. to windows, kitchen units, bathroom fittings, overflowing bath or sink)
- your garden (if you have one)
- chimneys (keeping them swept if in use).

**Damage caused by floods will be your responsibility if they are caused by:**

- your appliances
- plumbing not installed by Mount Green
- overflowing baths or sinks.

You will also be responsible if your flood damages a neighbouring home. We strongly recommend you take out insurance to cover the contents of your home (see Insurance in section 1). This normally covers damage caused to neighbouring homes too.

Your tenancy agreement contains more detailed information about your responsibilities. If in doubt please contact your housing services co-ordinator.

## **Communal hallways and landings**

The communal hallways and landing must be kept clear at all times. Items such as bicycles, pushchairs, furniture, shoes etc are a hazard and may be removed and disposed of if found in these areas.

Please keep these areas clean and tidy and clear up any dirt or mess left by you or visitors to your household.

## **Parking and garages**

If you have a garage or parking space, please use it for the parking of vehicles only. This will help reduce crowding on the roads.

Please observe all 'no parking signs' or 'keep clear' signs and do not obstruct pavements and pathways with vehicles.

Please do not obstruct access to the garages at any time.

Subletting of garages is not permitted.

## **Pets**

If you would like to keep a pet, you must first write to us. Permission may be given for cats, dogs and other domestic pets.

Dogs must be kept in the care and control of a responsible adult at all times. They must be kept on a lead at all times and must not be allowed to foul the communal areas.

Permission may be withdrawn if your pet is found to be causing a nuisance

## **Refuse**

Refuse containers are provided on all our estates. They are for the disposal of household waste only. Please leave the area clean and tidy. Do not leave refuse on the floor in the bin areas and if you spill something, remember it is your responsibility to clear it up

## **Recycling**

Where facilities are provided, please recycle as much of your household waste as possible. Your local authority will be able to tell you where your nearest recycling point is if there are no facilities on your estate.

## **Disposal of large items**

Large items are not to be left in bin areas. They will be a dangerous eyesore and attract vandals. The refuse collectors will not take large items away. If you want to get rid of an old bed, fridge, TV, carpet or other large item, please call your local council. They can arrange to collect large items like this but there is normally a charge. Alternatively your local authority will have several waste disposal and recycling centres where you can take large items and dispose of them safely.

## **TV and satellite dishes**

You will probably find that an aerial is already installed, with a TV socket into your living room. We are responsible for repairs to communal aerials but you must make sure you have a television licence. If you live in a house and want to install a satellite dish you will need written permission from Mount Green. Permission to install a dish may be granted, depending on where it will be located on the building.

# SHELTERED HOUSING

## **Your scheme manager**

Each of our sheltered housing schemes has a scheme manager who manages the scheme.

## **Contacting your scheme manager**

The scheme manager will work normal office hours, Monday to Friday, between 9am and 5pm. They can be contacted by telephone or by calling in to their office. However, if there is an emergency you should call the scheme manager at once by pulling the alarm cord.

Please do not tie up the pull cord as this may make it harder to use in an emergency. If the scheme manager is off duty then your call will be transferred to a control centre, who can give you help and support in an emergency. They are open 24 hours a day.

Please remember that your scheme manager will not always be on duty and may sometimes need to leave the scheme for meetings or other professional reasons. If leaving the premises the scheme manager will transfer emergency alarm calls to the control centre. We ask you to respect the scheme manager's privacy when they are off duty (for example in the evenings, weekends and bank holidays).

## **What does the scheme manager do?**

Your scheme manager is responsible for managing your sheltered housing scheme. They will try to make sure things run smoothly, including helping to arrange the support or care you need.

You will be contacted by the scheme manager on a regular basis but he or she will not intrude on your privacy. If you would like the scheme manager to call more often (for example if you are unwell) then please ask.

The pull cord in your home will be checked by the scheme manager every three months to make sure that it is working properly.

Please remember that your scheme manager is not allowed to handle your money, go shopping for you, or collect your pension or prescription. They are also not allowed to lift you in the event of a fall or administer medicines.

### **Can they contact relatives?**

In an emergency the scheme manager or community alarm may need to contact your friends or relatives. Please make sure the scheme manager has the names, addresses and telephone numbers of people you wish us to contact in an emergency. When you first arrive you will be asked to fill in a form giving us this information. Please keep us up to date with any changes of address or telephone number.

### **If you go away**

If you are going to be away overnight or for longer please tell the scheme manager. In an emergency the scheme manager may need to know who is in the building so it is important to let them know if you are not around.

### **How to arrange a repair**

If you need a repair to your home you can either contact the office on the freephone number 0800 389 7219 or your scheme manager who will be able to arrange for the work to be done. Outside office hours you can request an emergency repair by calling 01372 819092 or by pulling your alarm cord. Emergency and urgent repairs will be done quickly. Routine and non-routine repairs may take a little longer. Your scheme manager will be able to tell you roughly how long you might have to wait.

## COMPLAINTS ABOUT MOUNT GREEN

We want to give the highest quality services to our tenants. This means our staff will respond positively and immediately to any concern you have about our service. We expect that most of your concerns will be resolved very quickly. However, if you remain unhappy, you will be told about our formal complaints procedure and invited to take the following action.

### **Stage 1**

If you wish to use the complaints procedure, please let us know, preferably in writing, by letter or using a complaints form, available from head office. You should send your complaint to the Director of Operations. We can complete the form for you, if you prefer, and send you a copy to check.

Your complaint will be acknowledged within 48 hours and a full response given within 10 working days.

### **Stage 2**

If you remain unhappy you will be asked to put your complaint in writing to the Chief Executive who will respond within 10 working days of receiving the complaint.

### **Stage 3**

If you are still dissatisfied you can use our appeals procedure, which is the final stage of Mount Green's formal complaints procedure. An appeals panel will be convened within 30 working days of receiving your complaint. They will consider the complaint and give you an opportunity to put your case in person. They can also request that staff members attend the panel hearing.

The decision of the appeals panel is final. Their decision will be made in writing within three working days of the panel hearing. If you are not satisfied after completing the complaints procedures you can take your complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman, 3rd Floor, Norman House, 105 – 109 The Strand, London WC2R 0AA.

Complaints received about another tenant will be dealt with under Mount Green's Anti- Social Behaviour procedure.

*This is a summary of our full Complaints procedure, which is available on request.*

## RENT ARREARS

Your rent is due on the first day of each month, paid one month in advance. Quarterly statements will be sent to all tenants detailing payments made. If you are having problems paying your rent we will offer you benefits advice or refer you to other agencies who may be able to help.

If your account falls into arrears then we will take action promptly.

### ***Stage 1: Initial warning***

We will send you an initial reminder letter showing the arrears on your account.

### ***Stage 2: Second warning***

A second reminder letter will be sent to tenants who fail to respond to the initial reminder letter. We will ask you to clear the account or make arrangements to pay by instalments. The letter will also stress the consequences of failing to respond. We will offer to meet you to discuss the matter. The letter will be followed up, if possible, by a telephone call or a home visit - either to agree an appointment or to arrange how to clear the debt.

### ***Stage 3: Final warning***

If we receive no response (and cannot agree a way of clearing the debt) we will write to you again. This letter will warn that unless contact is made immediately, a Notice of Seeking Possession will be served after seven days. The letter will explain the implications of serving such a Notice.

**Stage 4: Notice of seeking possession**

The notice of seeking possession will be served by handing it to you in person or delivering it through your door.

If arrears continue to mount up, and no attempt is made to clear or reduce the outstanding amount, we will make every effort to contact you to discuss the problem.

After 28 days from the date of service of the Notice of Seeking Possession, Mount Green may apply to the Court to commence possession proceedings.

**Stage 5: Court proceedings and eviction**

If tenants do not pay their rent then we will take court action. We will ask the court for a possession order. If a tenant refuses to be bound by the court's ruling we will take action to evict. The tenant will not be allowed back into the property once the eviction has taken place. Where a tenant is evicted still owing money we shall continue court action to get repayment.

*This is a summary of the full policy on Rent Arrears, which is available on request.*

## ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

This is a summary of our full anti-social behaviour policy and procedure statement which is available on request.

MGHA is committed to zero tolerance of anti-social behaviour. Staff are trained in how to respond to reports of anti social behaviour and will take the appropriate action. You will be kept informed of any actions to be taken by the Association.

## Procedure

In the event of anti social behaviour we have a procedure which will be followed in all cases.

### **Stage 1: Initial complaint**

If a report of anti-social behaviour is received by telephone, we will fill in an incident form. This will be handed to our Housing Services Co-ordinator for action. All written complaints of anti-social behaviour will be passed immediately to the Housing Services Co-ordinator.

In cases of harassment or serious nuisance we will arrange to interview the victim(s) within 24 hours. For all other reports we shall arrange an interview within five working days.

### **Stage 2: Follow-up visit**

The interview should establish details of the reported incident(s) and enable the Housing Services Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the Principal Housing Officer, to determine the seriousness of the complaint and the appropriate action to be taken.

### **Stage 3: Action plan**

Following the detailed interview, an action plan should be drawn up in writing, identifying the action that will be taken by Mount Green. This will be confirmed to the victim/complainant and will depend on, for example:

- the nature of the incident
- whether it is an isolated or ongoing problem
- whether the incident was witnessed
- whether it is possible to involve the police
- whether the perpetrators can be identified.

Where sufficient evidence can be obtained we will take action against anyone who harasses or causes a nuisance to another tenant, tenant's family, staff or representatives of the association. This includes taking court action and seeking eviction.

*This is summary of our full Anti Social Behaviour policy and procedure, which is available on request.*

## HOME LOSS AND DISTURBANCE

If you are required to move permanently from your home, in order for us to carry out redevelopment or improvement works, and have lived in your property for at least one year, you may be entitled to a home loss payment. It is a payment in recognition of the disturbance and disruption of losing what is often a long standing home.

If you have lived in the property for less than one year, you may still be entitled to claim. You will need to discuss your circumstances with the Special Projects Officer

The home loss payment is currently £3400

### **Making a claim**

The Special Projects Officer will be able to advise you whether you qualify for a payment. If you do, you will be asked to complete a claims form. The form should be returned to the Special Projects Officer for processing. You will also be entitled to disturbance payments.

### **Disturbance Payments**

If you are required to move from your home on a temporary basis in order for us to carry out work on your property, and return to your original home once the work is completed, you may be entitled to a disturbance payment to cover reasonable disturbance expenses. (You will not be entitled to Home Loss payment)

- Redirection of mail
- Other reasonable expenses incurred approved by the association

You will be asked to complete a claim form, listing your expenses incurred as a result of the disturbance. The sum will be determined on an individual basis depending on the expenses incurred. The form should be returned to the Special Projects Officer for processing.

### **Making a claim**

You may be entitled to claim for:

- Removal costs
- Replacement curtains when required
- Replacement carpets when required
- Reconnection of telephone

*This is a summary of the full policy on your right to Home Loss and Disturbance payment, which is available on request.*

## TENANT PARTICIPATION

Mount Green offers a range of different ways you can take part in running the Association and developing its services. Our approach to tenant participation is based on:

- information
- consultation
- influence.

### **Information**

Our regular newsletters and information bulletins will tell you about:

- organisational developments
- Mount Green's performance as a landlord
- local developments that are likely to affect you or be of interest generally, national developments and significant new laws on which you may have a view (e.g. housing law and benefits).

As well as newsletters and bulletins you will also receive:

- quarterly rent statements with details of your rent account
- details of plans and targets for improving our services (we will also invite you to be involved in reviewing service delivery and developing service specifications)
- a tenants' handbook, outlining Mount Green's housing policies, repair procedures and important contacts and related information.

All information will be provided in plain English and can be translated on request. It will also be available in large print, tape and Braille formats.

## **Consultation**

We shall sometimes consult with tenants through open meetings, focus groups and regular tenant surveys. We shall consult with tenants over issues such as:

- satisfaction with our services
- priorities for improvements
- design of new property
- repairs or improvement programmes
- changes to the tenancy agreement.

We want as many people as possible to take part in consultation. We will choose venues that are easily accessible and hold meetings at times when most people can come along. Where possible, transport and childcare will also be arranged. We will be sensitive to the needs of different groups within the community and the possible need for separate consultation to ensure their views are heard.

We shall also carry out postal surveys about maintenance standards (using reply-paid envelopes), and call tenants by telephone after repairs have been carried out in their homes.

## **Influence**

As well as communicating and consulting with tenants, we shall show how your views have influenced our services and decisions. This means giving feedback following consultation, and showing how the consultation has influenced our plans.

We shall also enable tenants to influence the management and service standards of the organisation through:

- formally recognised residents' associations
- the residents forum
- tenant membership of Mount Green's Board and management sub-committees
- development of a tenant editorial board for the Association's newsletter.

## **Residents' associations**

Mount Green will help residents to set up formal resident associations, where they wish to do so. We will help you establish a constitution and elect Officers for the residents' association. Once established, Mount Green will continue to fund the administration of the residents' association.

Officers of the residents' association will be offered training to assist them in their role. Resident associations will be encouraged to link with other active tenant groups and become members of national tenant organisations. The resident association will also be encouraged and enabled to manage its own fundraising.

## **Community development**

Where residents express a desire to improve an aspect of their community, Mount Green will work with them to develop ideas and establish their feasibility. If an action plan is agreed Mount Green will:

- identify the project within its own business/corporate plan
- provide funding support either as finance or in kind
- link with appropriate agencies able to assist with the project
- support a fundraising strategy
- enable a consultation process with those affected by the project.

## ALLOCATIONS AND TRANSFERS

This is a summary of our Allocations policy.

### **General needs housing**

General needs homes include our ordinary houses and flats, and also our accommodation for people with disabilities. Between 50% and 75% of our vacancies go to people on local authority waiting lists. We also keep our own waiting list for some areas.

### **Sheltered housing**

Between 50% and 75% of our sheltered homes are offered to people on local authority's housing lists. However, we also have an open waiting list for sheltered vacancies in all our schemes.

### **Transfers**

When you ask to move from your home to a different Mount Green home this is known as a transfer. The transfer list uses a points system to work out who is a high priority. The system is explained in full in our Transfer Policy, which is available on request.

Although anyone can apply for a transfer it is unlikely that you will be successful unless you qualify for enough points. Points are awarded for a range of reasons. You will, for example, be awarded points because of:

- needing to move to let us carry out major building works to your home
- needing to move for medical reasons
- sexual, racial harassment, domestic violence
- tenants prepared to move to a smaller home because the home they occupy is too large for their needs
- overcrowding
- persistent unresolvable problems such as a neighbour dispute or noise nuisance.

If the property you are living in is too large for your needs and you move to smaller accommodation within Mount Green, you may be entitled to claim a flat rate payment of £4000 to help towards your move.

The length of time on the waiting list will also be taken into account. If you only qualify for a low points score you will be encouraged to take advantage of other options to help you move. These include mutual exchanges and the HOMES schemes (see below).

Please note that tenants with rent arrears or involved in court action with Mount Green will not be approved for a transfer

## **Moving home**

As well as transfers there may be other ways we can help you to move home. These include:

- Mutual exchanges – where you swap homes with another Mount Green tenant, or a tenant of another housing association or local authority.
- The Homes Scheme - which include HOMESwap (where tenants organise their own swaps anywhere in the country) and HOMES mobility (transfers organised by the housing association to anywhere in the country).

For further information about different ways you can move home, please contact the Allocations Co-ordinator.

*This is a summary of our full Allocation and Transfer policy, which is available on request.*

## USEFUL INFORMATION

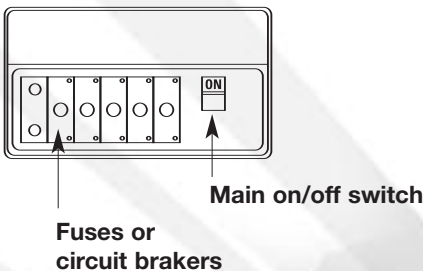
### Loss of electric light or power

If you do not have electric light or power, and your neighbours are not affected, the following will help you identify the problem.

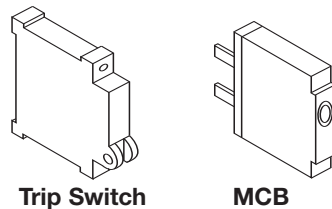
Fuse or trip switch

Check your consumer unit or fuse box, it will either have fuses or trip switches (see diagrams). Modern electric circuits are fitted with a circuit breaker fuse system. If a fault develops, a switch is tripped and the circuit is broken.

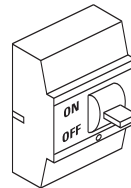
#### Electricity consumer unit



#### Types of fuses



**Trip Switch  
(replaces fuses  
in modern  
consumer units)**



### Setting a trip switch

Open the cover of the consumer unit to expose the trip switches. The consumer unit is usually next to the electricity meter. Check which switches have tripped to the OFF position and put them back to the ON position.

If tripping occurs again, it is probably caused by a faulty appliance. You need to identify which circuit is being affected and which appliance on that circuit is causing the problem.

To identify which appliance is faulty, unplug all the appliances on the problem circuit and switch off the immersion heater. Switch the tripped switch to the ON position and plug in the appliances one by one until the trip goes again. Leave that appliance unplugged. If it is your appliance that is at fault you will need to get it checked by a qualified electrician or service engineer. If it is a Mount Green appliance that is at fault, report it to our repairs department.

## What causes it to trip or blow a fuse?

- An overloaded circuit.
- Too many appliances being used at the same time.
- A faulty or misused appliance.
- Overfilled kettles.
- Unclean toasters.
- Cooker rings worn out or cracked.
- Faulty immersion heaters.
- Faulty connection on leads to appliances.
- Light bulbs blowing.

## Condensation

The following steps will help you reduce the condensation in your home.

### **To produce less moisture:**

- cover pans and do not leave kettles boiling
- dry washing outdoors on a line or put it in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open or fan on
- vent any tumble dryer to the outside, unless it is the self-condensing type.

## Ventilate to remove moisture

You can ventilate your home without making draughts.

- Keep a small window ajar or a trickle ventilator open when someone is in the room.
- Ventilate kitchens and bathrooms when in use by opening the windows wider.
- Or use the humidistat-controlled electric fan if you have one. These come on automatically when the air becomes humid.
- Close the kitchen and bathroom doors when these rooms are in use, even if you kitchen and bathroom has an extractor fan. This will help prevent moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms, which are often colder and more likely to get condensation.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes. Avoid putting too many things in them as this stops the air circulating. Where possible, position wardrobes and furniture against internal walls.

### ***Useful information relating to your property***

Your Gas and Electric Meter, Electric Consumer Unit and Mains Stopcock are located as follows:

• Gas Meter	<input type="text"/>
• Electric Meter	<input type="text"/>
• Electric Consumer Unit	<input type="text"/>
• Mains Stopcock	<input type="text"/>

### ***Useful Telephone Numbers***

Mount Green Housing Association 33 Bridge Street, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 8BN.	01372 379555
Freephone Repairs	0800 389 7219
Emergency out of Hours Repairs	01372 819092
Transco	0800 111999
Transco (hearing impaired)	0800 371787

## Useful Addresses

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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