

**SOUTHWARK AND LONDON DIOCESAN HOUSING
ASSOCIATION**

RESIDENTS' HANDBOOK





Useful Numbers

Police/fire/ambulance

999

BT Directory Enquiries

118500

SLDHA Main Office Number

020 7089 1370

SLDHA Emergency Repairs Number

020 7928 7811

(Homecare)

Plumbing Emergency Number

07946 314 749

(One Stop Gas and Plumbing)

Gas Emergencies (Transco)

0800 111999

EDF Energy

0800 028 0247

Powergen

0800 731 3313

British Gas Customer Services

0845 609 1122

NHS Direct

0845 4647

SLDHA Website address:

www.southwark.anglican.org/sldha



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WHO ARE WE?



Southwark and London Diocesan Housing Association (SLDHA) is a charity which was established by the Church of England Dioceses of Southwark and London, and was registered with the Housing Corporation in 1990 to provide and run good-quality housing at affordable rents. We currently manage about 200 properties, ranging from one bedsit to several 4-bedroomed houses. Most of these we built ourselves, often on land which was formerly used by the church, and we are in the process of completing a further 58 properties in Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Most of our properties are less than 20 years old. All of them meet the “Decent Homes” standard set by the government, and all our new buildings meet high “Eco-homes” standards.

We are run by a Management Committee of volunteers, a majority of whom must be either clergy or lay members of the Church of England. We have one tenant representative on the Management Committee so far, and would like to have more. Between them, the Committee members have a wide range of expertise and experience relevant to social housing. They oversee all the work of the Association and help to plan for the future.

We have a small group of paid staff who run the Association’s day to day affairs, and who will deal with issues on your behalf.

We have a strong policy of ensuring that everyone is treated fairly and with respect, without regard to ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed or disability. If at any time you feel that the Association is acting unfairly, please tell us.

You can find out more about SLDHA and its people on our website, southwark.anglican.org/SLDHA, or from our Annual Report.

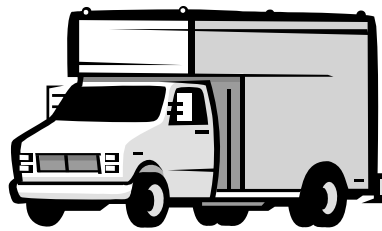
BECOMING A TENANT WITH US: GETTING A PROPERTY



One of the Advantages of being a small housing association is that we pride ourselves on being able to provide a good standard of service and care to our tenants.

Nearly all our tenants are nominated to us by their Local Authorities, working from their standard register of people with housing needs. Very few people are nominated by local churches. If you wish to be considered for a SLDHA tenancy, you will need to contact your Local Authority to get onto their register.

BECOMING A TENANT WITH US: MOVING IN



As a tenant with us, you will need to pay your rent (monthly or weekly) in advance.

You will need to contact the following :-

Electricity supplier

Gas supplier

Water supplier

Telephone supplier if you want to take over an existing line or to have one put in

Council tax department of the local council

Department for Work and Pensions (if you are claiming benefit)

Housing Benefit Department (if you are claiming benefit)

Personal insurers (for the contents of your home)

It is important to contact the first 4 above in case the previous tenants have not notified them that they are moving out, as you could be charged for services they have used. We suggest you read your meters as soon as you are given the keys. Ask for a termination bill to be forwarded to the previous occupants and for a new account to be set up in your name from the date that your tenancy started. Please note that you may need to show your offer letter or tenancy agreement to these suppliers.

If you are claiming benefit, please notify your change of address immediately, as otherwise you may lose some benefit. If you have not been claiming benefit so far, you may still find that you will be eligible for some benefit (e.g. Council Tax and Housing Benefit) from now on.

You need to consider insuring your own furniture and possessions, because our insurance policy does not cover them; it only covers the building itself. We suggest that you get more than one quote, as costs for home contents insurance can vary enormously. If you would like further information on insurance providers, please contact us.

GETTING HELP: WELFARE BENEFITS



If you are in low paid work, or not in work, and find it difficult to manage, there are a number of benefits you may be entitled to claim. If you are not sure what you may be entitled to, we suggest you ask the Citizens' Advice Bureau or your local Council to guide you through the possibilities. Among the possibilities are :-

Housing Benefit, to help pay your rent.

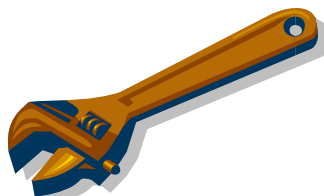
Income Support, to help meet basic needs. If you qualify for this, you are likely to qualify for **Council Tax benefit and Housing benefit**, and also for free prescriptions, free school meals etc.

The Social Fund, which can lend money for exceptional costs such as moving house or buying furniture

Tax credits, to help in bringing up children.

There are further benefits available for people with long term illnesses or disabilities.

GETTING HELP: REPAIRS



We would expect you to carry out trivial repairs, for example replacing light bulbs, or unblocking a sink, or repairs to your own fixtures and fittings. For all other repairs, telephone us on **020 7089 1370** (office hours only) or on our emergency out-of-hours number 020 7928 7811, or our Gas and Plumbing Emergencies number 07946 314749, and tell them what is wrong. We will aim to get a contractor to you within 24 hours for emergency repairs, and within 1 week for all other urgent repairs. Minor repairs may take up to 4 weeks.

If you have an emergency in the evening, at night or at a weekend, and it offers a serious risk to your health and safety or to the fabric of the building, then contact the appropriate emergency service to deal with it, and let us know on the above number when the office is open. Emergencies include such things as flooding, electrical faults and gas leaks.

When you ring to tell us of a problem needing repair, we will need to know when you are likely to be at home, so that we can try to arrange for our contractor to come at a time suitable to you. We may want to arrange for the job to be inspected before and after repair is arranged.

Our contractors will normally carry identification. You should ask to see their ID, to be sure that they are who they claim to be. If you are not sure whether they are genuine, ring us so that we can vouch for them.

Our contractors aim to carry out all repairs to a high standard. If you are not satisfied with the quality of a repair, let us know immediately.

Emergency numbers :- Homecare

020 7928 7811

One Stop Gas & Plumbing

07946 314749

MAKING YOUR VIEWS HEARD



You are welcome to ring us up at any time to tell us of things that concern you. We also run a questionnaire once a year, so that every tenant can tell us what they think of how their properties are managed, and hold tenants' meetings from time to time in our different sites. At the moment we have one tenant on our Management Committee, and we hope to persuade one or two more to join that Committee who can give us a view on what we are doing and where we are going. If you would be interested in this, please let us know.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES



We aim to ensure that you have a decent home, at an affordable rent, and that you can live your lives there undisturbed. We therefore :-

Pride ourselves on building our homes to a high standard

Review them at intervals to see that they remain at a good standard, and carry out a programme of cyclical maintenance, every so often (typically 5-7 years)

Insure them against damage to the structure

Look after any communal areas

Provide you with a formal written tenancy agreement

Treat you courteously at all times

Review rents and service charges annually, ensuring that they remain in line with the government guidelines and that you receive one month's notice of any change

Take appropriate measures to ensure that your lives are not disrupted by crime or anti-social behaviour

Encourage you to tell us about anything that concerns you

Respond to anything you raise with us within 2 weeks (this may sometimes be an initial reply while we investigate an issue in depth)

Encourage our residents to build up a degree of community spirit and involvement

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES



You want to live comfortably in your home, and your neighbours similarly want to live comfortably around you. You therefore need to :-

Look after your home and keep it safe and secure.

Pay your rent promptly (we cannot afford to have tenants falling into arrears; as a charity we do not have great sums of money to cover this). If you receive Housing Benefit, please request that it be paid direct to us as landlord, and you will still need to ensure that they pay us regularly and on time. If you fall behind with your rent, talk to us immediately so that together we can plan how you will catch up. If you are persistently behind, at worst we may have to evict you.

Treat your neighbours with courtesy, respecting their rights and privacy. Make sure your family and any guests similarly treat neighbours with respect. We expect you to be considerate to your neighbours, and if you are not, for example through noise, nuisance or anti-social behaviour, we will take action, and at the worst may have to evict you.

Live in this home, and not sublet any part of it, or use it as a base for your business, unless you have obtained our prior written agreement.

Let us know early of any emerging problems, so that we can assist in sorting them out before they become serious.

Treat our staff with courtesy at all times. We aim to be courteous in all our dealings with you, and we ask you to be courteous with us. We will not tolerate harassment or rudeness to our staff..

As appropriate, allow people access to carry out repairs and improvements. If you wish to make improvements yourself, please talk to us first.

Do not allow your home to be used as a base for crime or drugs.

MOVING TO ANOTHER PROPERTY



If your circumstances change, for example through having children or wanting to downsize, you may need to consider moving to a different property. Let us know what you want and we will discuss the options with you. As a small organisation, we are limited in the number of available properties we could offer at any one time.

If you are in rent arrears, we will not normally be prepared to offer you a transfer.

If you decide to move out of your home, please give us 28 days notice and ensure that your rent is paid up to the date of leaving, and let us have a forwarding address. You will also need to arrange for the meters to be read on gas, water, electricity and telephone, so that you are only billed for what you yourself have used. Please return all keys to us when you leave, and leave the property tidy and clear of rubbish.

WHAT IF IT ALL GOES WRONG?



If you have a complaint that you feel has not been resolved satisfactorily, please let us know, by telephone, in person, in writing or by e-mail. It is helpful if you can tell us what it is that you would like us to do. You may ask a tenant representative to make a complaint on your behalf. We will log it as a complaint, and the Operations Manager will try to resolve it to your satisfaction within 15 working days. If he/she is unable to do so, you may ask for it to be referred to the Director, who will investigate it separately and aim to resolve it to your satisfaction within 15 working days of receiving the referral.

If he/she too cannot give you satisfaction, you should write to the Chair of the Management Committee at Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street, London, SE1 1HW. The Chair, who is not an employee of the Association, will arrange for a Management Committee member to meet you to discuss the situation. You may bring a friend to that meeting to help explain your issue and a member of staff will also be present. The Management Committee member will investigate the complaint in full and take a report to the next meeting of the Management Committee, which will make a final decision on what is to be done. The decision will be communicated to you in writing.

If none of this works for you, you have the right to go to the Independent Housing Ombudsman, Norman House, 105-109 The Strand, LONDON WC2R 0AA (telephone 020 7836 3630; fax 020 7836 3900).

A full copy of the Complaints Procedure is available from the Association office.

If you feel that the Association has discriminated against you illegally, you can take the complaint to the County Court at any time.