

Easy Housing Association

Service User Handbook

Easy Housing Association

Introduction

You have been referred to the Easy Housing Association Floating support service. This support service is a short-term support service to meet the needs of refugees and others who may have lost accommodation before or be facing possible homelessness as they are at risk of losing their tenancy

Easy Housing is a free service offering a tailored and comprehensive package of help and support for up to 1 year to enable people to maintain their tenancies, live safely, comfortably and independently and participate within the community. The service may also provide advice and assistance to landlords to resolve tenancy issues through negotiation and liaison.

This handbook has been designed to be used by people who have been referred to the Easy Housing Association service and also by existing service users as a practical guide to the services we offer.

These services are funded through supporting people program in the borough you live.

Please also tell us if you want this document in a different language. You can contact us on 0208-4276999 and we will send you the format you ask for as soon as we can.

Floating Support Service

Easy Housing provides comprehensive support to you with issues around your housing, economic wellbeing, health, safety and security, social and civic participation and the enjoyment and achievements of your family. We work with

you to help you improve your situation and develop the skills needed to manage independently in to the future.

Needs & Risk Assessment

When you move into a property we will make an appointment for a Support Officer to visit you in your new home. During this visit we will carry out a needs and risk assessment to determine what support you require, if any.

The needs and risk assessments will take full account of your views, targets and aspirations. Should you disagree with any outcomes of the assessment or reviews your views and reasons will be recorded.

During the needs assessment we will collect basic information from you, including the following:

- ✓ Full name and date of birth for you and all members of your household
- ✓ Details of your housing history, any tenancy breaches or anti-social behaviour
- ✓ Personal finances
- ✓ Physical and mental health
- ✓ Details of any medication you take
- ✓ Details of your Doctor and any other Key Worker involvement
- ✓ Social and leisure interests
- ✓ Child care and education

You will be involved with the risk assessment we carry out. The risk assessment will identify anything or anyone that you may be at risk from or to and how, by working together, we can minimise these risks.

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Once we have carried out our initial needs and risk assessment we will provide you with a written explanation of the outcome. We sometimes make decisions based on the information you have given us that means we are unable to offer you a service. If this happens we will always inform you and the person who referred you as soon as possible giving you the reasons for our decision. In these instances we may refer you to other more appropriate services.

You have the right of appeal against any decisions arising from assessments or reviews with which you disagree. If you wish to appeal, please read the Appeals Procedure section.

Details of the eligibility criteria for the Easy Housing Association service are available in full upon request.

Support Planning

If you are accepted as a client we will work with you to draw up an action plan. Your action plan will incorporate specific intended outcomes that you have agreed with your support officer. If appropriate we will also agree these outcomes with carers, relatives or other advocates.

Your action plan looks at the support you need to help you maintain your tenancy, things like paying your rent or budgeting your money, obtaining furniture to set up your home, accessing education, training or employment or becoming involved in the local community.

Your plan will help you make choices about your lifestyle and decisions on how you want to live.

Your action plan will be reviewed with you on a regular basis to monitor progress and to ensure that it is responsive to your

needs. You may ask for a review of your action plan at any time.

The purpose of the action plan is to help you gain the confidence and skills you need to be independent. Our help and support will therefore reduce gradually as you make progress, when confident you can manage we will agree with you when our support will end.

Your Rights

We believe that anyone who receives support from Easy Housing Association should expect the following:

- ✓ To be treated with respect
- ✓ To be treated as an individual
- ✓ To be listened to
- ✓ To be supported by staff that know and understand you
- ✓ To be in control of decisions that may affect you
- ✓ To be able to make choices about your lifestyle
- ✓ To feel safe within your own home
- ✓ To be consulted about the service you receive
- ✓ To be supported if you wish to raise a concern or make a complaint

Your Responsibilities

- ✓ To engage with the service
- ✓ To comply with your conditions of tenancy
- ✓ To be polite
- ✓ To keep to your appointments or let us know if you need to rearrange them
- ✓ To tell us about any changes in your circumstances or any problems you have that may affect your ability to manage your tenancy.

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Information Sharing and Confidentiality

We will ask you to sign a consent form giving us permission to share information about you with other agencies as required. We will discuss with you what information we want to share and with whom

All information about you will be kept up-to-date and will be stored securely.

You have the right to ask us not to share your information. You also have the right to see the information that we keep about you. You have the right to disagree with the information and for this to be written in your personal file.

If you would like further information about how Easy Housing Association will manage your personal information please refer to our Data Protection policy which is available on the website or by request.

Health and Safety

There are rules and guidelines in place to try and stop accidents from happening that may result in people being injured or taken ill.

We are all responsible for our own health and safety. If you see something that may cause an accident or injury you need to make everyone who may be affected aware of the danger. Inform your landlord who will look into the problem with you.

We will carry out basic health and safety checks within your home to ensure that it is safe for you and your family to live in. You will be encouraged to take part in any checks that we carry out.

When we visit you, we will also ensure that you are aware of where the emergency exit points are from your accommodation and that you have a suitable exit route planned. We will also check that you know how to test your smoke alarms to ensure that these are maintained in good working order.

Equal Opportunities/Anti-Discriminatory Practice

The objectives of this policy are to prevent unlawful discrimination and to take positive action to promote equality of opportunity for all.

You should not be treated differently because you are; male, female, young, elderly or a person with a disability.

You should not be treated differently because of your; religious beliefs, cultural beliefs, sexuality or colour of your skin.

Easy Housing Association staff will always respect your individuality and will ensure that you are always offered;

- ✓ Real choice
- ✓ Opportunity to develop
- ✓ Support to meet your personal needs

We recognise that different faiths structure their weeks and years differently and we are able to offer flexibility with our appointments to enable people to observe prayer requirements, holy days, festivals and ceremonies.

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Equal treatment will be given to all service users regardless of race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, cultural and social background, asylum or refugee status, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, sexual orientation, age, disability, health (including mental health and learning disability), and HIV status.

Service users have the right to protection against racial harassment. The information and services that Easy Housing Association provides will be appropriate, adequate and accessible to all.

Harassment and Abuse

Anyone can be harassed or abused. Harassment and abuse is a violation of individual human and civil rights by any other person or persons. Abuse comes in many forms and more than one type of abuse may be happening at the same time. Here are some forms of abuse to look out for;

Psychological Abuse – threats, intimidation, verbal abuse, deprivation of contact, isolation, locking someone up, inappropriate sanctions, humiliation, blaming

Physical Abuse – hitting, pinching, slapping, punching, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, unwarranted restraint

Physical Neglect – ignoring health needs, withholding food, heat and light, not allowing access to appropriate Health, Social or Education services

Sexual Abuse – rape, being party to witnessing sexual acts without consent
Financial or Material Abuse – theft, fraud, misuse of property

Discriminatory Abuse – racist, ageist, sexist or harassment or making jokes about someone's condition

If someone starts' telling you that they have been abused or you are concerned someone is being abused do not dismiss your concerns, you should do the following;

Listen very carefully, giving them your full attention If the person is in immediate danger call the police and/or ambulance Do not agree to keep it a secret – you cannot do this, report your concerns to your support officer

- ✓ Avoid asking questions about the alleged abuse
- ✓ Do not make judgements
- ✓ Do not confront the alleged abuser
 - ✓ Write an account of what you have been told for future Reference

You may be reading this and thinking that you are being abused, if so you need to decide if you want to tell someone to help you do something about it. If you do, you need to consider the following;

- ✓ When and how can you do this safely
- ✓ Who can you trust to tell – a friend, family member or do you need to speak directly to the police, your support officer
- ✓ Can you use a phone in private or see a trusted person in private
- ✓ Should you write a letter to the agencies above or a trusted friend
- ✓ Do you need support to do this

If you do not feel that any action has been taken tell someone else. It is a brave decision to tell someone

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else that you are being abused and possibly very frightening. If we hear about the abuse that is happening to you or someone you know, we can support you in doing something about it.

Service User Involvement

We need you to get involved with how you want Easy Housing Association to work for you. We would like you to tell us what you think is good about the service or about any changes you feel could be made to improve the support we provide to you.

There are lots of ways that you can get in contact with us, some of these are detailed below: -

- ✓ You can tell us your views during our visits
- ✓ Send us a letter or email
- ✓ Complete the comments form on our webpage
- ✓ Text us using the Text2U service

We will also invite you to take part in one or all of the following: -

- ✓ Telephone survey
- ✓ Complete one of our surveys or questionnaires
- ✓ Attend one of our Service User events
- ✓ Join our Service User Involvement Group

We will use the feedback we receive from you to improve the service we offer. We will keep you informed of how we propose to use any suggestions or comments that you make.

If you would like to find out more about our Service User Involvement Group please ask your support officer.

Appeals Procedure

You have the right of appeal against any decisions with which you disagree about, regarding your assessment, action plan, reviews or the decision to withdraw our support to you.

If you wish to appeal against any decision please put this in writing to the Easy Housing Association Team Manager within 21 days of the decision giving the reasons why you feel the decision is incorrect. Your letter should be sent to the following address: -

Easy Housing Team Manager
Suite 106 Marlborough House
159 High Street
Harrow Weald
HA3 5DX

Complaints, Comments and Compliments

Should you want to comment or compliment us on our service you can do this during one of your support visits, by sending us a letter, email or text, via our regular service user questionnaires or at one of our service user meetings.

Alternatively, you might want to complain if you are not happy with something we have done or the standard of service we have provided. We hope that we can settle any complaints quickly and informally. If

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you want to make a formal complaint, you should put it in writing, if you can, to the Support Manager and post this to them at Easy Housing Association Office in the above address.

Complaints procedure

There are a number of stages in the Easy Housing complaints procedure.

You should start at Stage One and then move on to the next stage if you are not satisfied with the outcome.

Stage One - Contact us and explain your complaint to the officer responsible for the service you want to complain about. If your complaint is in writing, the officer will aim to send an acknowledgement within three working days and then send a full reply within 10 working days. If you make a complaint by phone or in person, we will either settle your complaint immediately or aim to give you a full reply within 10 working days.

Stage Two – If you are not satisfied with the outcome to your complaint put your complaint in writing to the Director responsible for the service. You should be sent an acknowledgement within 3 working days and we aim to give a full reply within 10 working days.

Stage Three - If you are still not satisfied, write to the Chairman with your complaint. You should be sent an acknowledgement within 3 working days and we aim to give a full reply within 10 working days.

Complex issues

Issues are sometimes complex and if so, we may need to take longer than 10 working days to reply fully. If this is the case, we will let you know within 10 working days what action we are taking and how long a full reply is likely to take.

We do not deal with some complaints under our complaints procedure. These are outlined in our guide to our policy please ask us for a copy of this.

02080702110

