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Section one: **Welcome to Nehemiah UCHA**

Letter from the chairman

Dear Tenants,

Nehemiah UCHA is the formalization of a merger of Nehemiah Housing Association and United Churches Housing Association. The merger became effective on 2nd April 2007 at which point the merged organisation become known as Nehemiah UCHA

The background to Nehemiah is firmly embedded in the Church of God of Prophecy, having emerged from the identification by church leaders of a need to provide homes for congregation elders in 1986.

From the outset, Nehemiah approached the task of housing the elderly members of its community with a professionalism, which included forming a management committee and a working party, consulting Local Authorities; established housing Associations and commissioning university research.

UCHA was formed following the disturbances which

occurred in the Handsworth and Lozells areas of the City of Birmingham in 1985.

Local church leaders and community organization joined together in order to discern how to deal with the many issues that surfaced as a result of the disturbances. The main area of concern which became paramount was in relation to housing needs within the local community.

In September 2005, after a period of discussion and acknowledgement of the shared values and aspirations of the two associations, both Nehemiah and United Church's Boards agreed to proceed with merging the two organisations.

For further information please contact Llewellyn Graham - Chief Executive on 0121 358 0966, see our website at www.nehemiah-ucha.co.uk or email: contact@nehemiah-ucha.co.uk

Dick Owusu-Darko, Chairman

How to contact Nehemiah UCHA

Address: 5 Beacon Court
Birmingham Road
Birmingham
B43 6NN

Telephone: 0121 358 0966

To report repairs telephone: 0845 840 7400

Monday to Friday 8am - 6pm

For emergency repairs only, at any other time:

08457 573 842

Who's who

Chief Executive:	Llewellyn Graham
Director of Finance :	Patrick Bryan
Director of Development & Property Services:	Kevin Fearon
Director of Housing:	Jenny Evans
Human Resources & Compliance Manager:	Janet Dubidat
Personal Assistant/ Office Manager:	Valerie Porter
Finance Manager:	Ruth Taylor
Tenant Involvement Manager:	Tony Douglas
Supported Housing Manager:	Brian Golden
Housing Manager:	Hugh Taylor
Asset Manager:	Bob Truslove
Maintenance Inspector:	Shafeeq Rahman

Finance Officers:	Audrey Small Bernie Kennedy Clarancia Meade
Housing Officers:	Manjit Sandhu Roxieanna Robinson Dyane Jackson
Housing Assistant - Allocations:	Gloria Peart
Housing Assistant - Repairs:	Theresa D'Silva

Section 48 Notices

In the matter of Section 48(1) of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987.
Notification by the Landlord of the Address for the Service of Notice.
This is to inform you that the address of Nehemiah UCHA (United Churches Housing Association Limited). for the Services of Notices (including Notices in Proceedings) is as follows:

**5 Beacon Court
Birmingham Road
Great Barr
BIRMINGHAM
B43 6NN**

**Telephone 0121 358 0966
Fax: 0121 358 0934**

Section five: **Performance Standards**

These are the standards that Nehemiah UCHA will be striving to achieve. Many of these standards are set by the Tenant Services Authority are not negotiable. Those which are set by Nehemiah UCHA will be discussed with tenant groups, and may be amended.

Rents

Increases to be no more than the guidelines set by the Tenant Services Authority, normally the retail price index + 0.5%, within rent restructuring and targets.

Rent collection

98% of annual debit (total rents payable)

Rent arrears

6% of annual debit

Vacant dwellings

Turnaround time from termination to reletting: 3.6 weeks

Any outstanding repair work to be completed within four weeks of new tenancy being signed.

Repairs completion targets

Emergency repairs: 99% within 24 hours

Urgent repairs: 98% within 5 working days

Normal repairs: 95% within 28 working days

If an inspection is required before work is ordered, this will be carried out within five working days of the repair report.

Neighbour disputes

All complaints will receive an initial response within three working days, and a written response within ten days of the receipt of the complaint advising of action to be taken.

Harassment

All complaints will receive an initial response (a visit, where necessary) within 48 hours, and a written response within seven days of the initial complaint.

Alterations / improvements

A written decision will be given within ten days of the receipt of the application. This decision will give any conditions relating to permission, or will give reasons for refusal.

Assignments / joint tenancies

Applications will receive a response in writing within ten days of the request.

Mutual exchanges

Initial responses will be provided within ten days, and decisions within 42 days of the initial application.

Correspondence

All letters and e-mails will be acknowledged or responded to within ten working days. A full response will be given wherever possible. Acknowledgments only will be given where information is required from other agencies.

Telephone messages

All telephone messages will be responded to within two days of request.

Tenant consultation

In areas where residents or tenants associations exist, meetings will be held quarterly with Nehemiah UCHA staff. Other meetings with staff will be held within 28 days of request. Meetings requested by individual tenants will be held within five days of the request.

Sheltered schemes addresses

PLUMMER HOUSE,
Burlington Street,
Aston,
Birmingham
Telephone: 0121 333 5845

Scheme Manager:
Mohinder Kaur
Support Worker: Fionnuala Moriarty,
Cook: Pauline Gordon
Assistant Cook: Carol Richardson

CHARLES PEARSON COURT,
Mill Drive,
Smethwick,
Sandwell,
Telephone: 0121 558 0904

Scheme Manager:
Lorraine Martin
Support Worker: Rosalie Blake
Cook: Beverley Bailey
Assistant Cook: Barbara Atherley

MCCALLA HOUSE,
Laburnum Street,
Graisley,
Wolverhampton
Telephone: 01902 429 974

Resident Scheme Manager:
Barbara Bailey
Support Worker: Sonia Beckford

NEHEMIAH COURT,
Bath Road
Caldmore
Walsall
WS1 3BS
Telephone: 01922 623660

Scheme Manager:
Lyris Sylvester
Support Worker: Beverley Higgins

HENRY COURT,
Charlton Street
Dudley
DY1 3AF
Telephone: 01384 240093

Scheme Manager:
Caroline Khan
Support Worker: Venice Bailey

**SUPPORTED HOUSING FOR
YOUNG PARENTS,**
Seacole Court
Hordern Road
Whitmore Reans
Wolverhampton
WV6 OHP
Telephone: 01902 753487
Scheme Manager:
Petra Gaynor

Customer care charter

We will be friendly and helpful at all times



We will deal with all enquiries quickly



We will make our answers easy to understand



We will keep appointments



We will make sure you know your rights



**We will carry out our duties, especially repairs,
and always protect your property.**



**We accept your right to complain and guarantee
a full investigation and response**



**We will provide a sensitive housing service for
all our customers**



**We will treat you as we would expect to be
treated ourselves.**



Section four: **Sheltered housing**

About this handbook

What is Nehemiah United Churches Housing Association?

Nehemiah UCHA purpose is to provide a quality housing service and to create and develop new housing solutions for those in housing need in the West Midlands, within the framework of promoting equality of opportunity for all.

Nehemiah UCHA owns and manages properties throughout the West Midlands. The Association was formed with the initial objective of providing general needs and supported housing for African Caribbean elders in the metropolitan districts of the West Midlands.

However the Association now provides housing for young families, single people and those with special needs.

Nehemiah UCHA seeks to meet the housing needs of all sections of the community and has forged strong partnerships with a number of established national and regional Housing Associations.

The Tenants' Handbook and Tenancy Agreement

The Tenancy Agreement at the front of this Handbook, which you signed at the commencement of your tenancy, sets out the responsibilities of the landlord and tenant.

How the Handbook works

This handbook contains a statement of your rights and obligations as a tenant, and provides fuller definition of the terms of your Tenancy Agreement. It is an important legal document which sets out the basis of your relationship with Nehemiah UCHA. Please keep it safe. The Handbook also contains details of our obligations to

you, and sets out what we, as landlords, expect of you as a tenant. We are committed to equal opportunities for everyone and we will observe all relevant Codes of Practice and other guidance in carrying out our obligations to you.

Explanation of Terms

If you are an individual, you are the assured tenant of the premises. If you are two or more individuals then you are joint assured tenants together and individually. An assured tenant is an individual who occupies a separate dwelling of which Nehemiah UCHA is the Landlord and in which the tenant lives as his/her only or

principal home. In the case of joint tenants, at least one of the joint tenants must occupy the dwelling as his/her only or principal home.

"The premises" means the dwelling house let to you, and any garden, outbuilding or fences let with it.

What is sheltered housing?

Nehemiah UCHA provides homes that are specially designed for older people and people with disabilities who may need support on a day to day basis, A range of accommodation styles are available.

1. One or two bedroom flats, located in two storey blocks, and linked to a central alarm system.

These schemes are situated at:

Hamilton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham
Legge Street, West Bromwich, Sandwell
McKen Court, Morris Street, West Bromwich, Sandwell

2. Bungalows, linked to a central alarm system
These schemes are situated at:

Festival Way, Racecourse, Wolverhampton
Crosby Close, Farndale, Wolverhampton, St Albans
Close, Wednesfield, Prole Street, Wolverhampton,

Fowler Street, Blackenhall,

3. One or two bedroom flats, with communal facilities, scheme manager and alarm system.

These schemes are situated at:

Charles Pearson Court, Smethwick, Sandwell
McCalla House, Graiseley, Wolverhampton
Plummer House, Aston, Birmingham
Nehemiah Court, Caldmore, Walsall
Henry Court, Charlton Street, Dudley

4. One or two bedroom flats for young single teenage mothers.

This scheme is located at:

Seacole Court,

About the sheltered housing service

To maintain independence, each flat has its own front door and includes everything that is needed to allow a person to live independently in the community.

Some of the ground floor flats have special provision for people who use wheelchairs or who have other disabilities.

There are lifts to the flats above first floor in Charles Pearson Court, McCalla House, Plummer House, Henry Court and Nehemiah Court. These schemes also have communal lounges and provide social activities, a laundry, a hairdressing salon, and an assisted bathroom with a Parker Bath and shower.

Schemes with communal facilities also have door entry systems to make them more secure. These incorporate two way speech to allow tenants to speak to visitors before allowing entry into the building.

The Scheme Managers call or visit every tenant daily and liaise on the tenant's behalf to co-ordinate care and health needs. Calls are diverted to a Central Control system when there is no one on duty, where staff will deal with all emergency calls from residents.

In some of Nehemiah UCHA's schemes a more intensive Extra Care service is provided, and a mid-day meal and other support services are available.

Allocations

All schemes except Extra Care schemes are allocated through Nehemiah UCHA normal allocation procedure. Ask your Housing Officer for a copy of the booklet "Allocations Policy - A guide for tenants".

Allocations to Extra Care Schemes are made by a joint assessment team from Social Services and Nehemiah UCHA.

Moving into a sheltered scheme

When you move into a sheltered scheme, you will be asked for certain personal information such as the name and address of your nearest relative and your doctor. This information is for the Scheme Manager and Central Control for use in an emergency.

It is extremely important that this information is kept up to date so please do not forget to inform the Scheme Manager of any changes.

Residents of sheltered housing with a Resident Scheme Manager and a communal lounge are entitled to a TV licence at a special concessionary rate per year. The licence covers you from the day you move in.

A guest room can be hired for your friends or family to stay for short periods at a charge of £5.00 per night. The communal lounge and dining areas are available for residents to use at all reasonable times. They are not generally available for private functions.

Social activities are arranged on a regular basis at all Nehemiah UCHA schemes.

Nehemiah UCHA will also liaise with other agencies, such as Social Services, to help you if you require support services or adaptations to your property.

Section two: **Your tenancy**

Your neighbourhood

Neighbours

You have the right to live peacefully in your home. You must not cause any nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to any of your neighbours, their children or visitors, nor must you allow any member of your household to do so. Remember your neighbour may not share your taste in music. You must also ensure that your children do not cause a nuisance to other residents or cause damage to communal areas on the estate.

If you are having a problem, always approach the offender first with a polite request regarding the matter. If the problem continues, contact your Housing Officer. Alternatively, if the problem is one of noise, consult your local Environmental Health Office. Many of them will have useful advice packs giving hints on how to tackle the problem and the help that is available for dealing with more difficult incidents. Noise problems are best dealt with (where possible) by co-operation between neighbours rather than the force of law. We expect you to be considerate to your neighbours in the same way you expect them to be considerate towards you. Excessive noise or unsociable behaviour

will be dealt with as a nuisance if likely to cause annoyance or inconvenience. If it is necessary to take legal action against your neighbour you will need to provide written evidence and may have to appear in court. In some instances, evidence may be accepted from 'professional witnesses', for example Housing Officers or the Police. You can of course, take your own action, if Nehemiah UCHA feels there is insufficient evidence for us to act on your behalf. You can do this by complaining direct to the Magistrates Court under Section 82 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. If you complain about nuisance or noise from your neighbours, your Housing Officer will contact you within 5 days to discuss the issues. Nehemiah UCHA will also work with other agencies to try to resolve any problems you are experiencing. However, in some cases, disputes between neighbours cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of either party. This may simply be due to different life styles.

Harassment

We are aware that on occasions some of our tenants suffer from harassment. If you are suffering from harassment, contact your Housing Officer and your complaint will be investigated. Nehemiah UCHA will contact you within 48 hours of your contacting us. We will also remove any racist or abusive graffiti within 48 hours of it being reported to us. Nehemiah UCHA will liaise with other agencies on your behalf. We will not take any action without your permission, but will provide advice and listen to your views. You have the right not to be harassed or suffer from threats of violence from other residents. You must not commit or allow members of your household to commit any form of harassment, which may

interfere with your peace and comfort or cause offence to any other tenant. Nehemiah UCHA has signed the Safer Estates Agreement, which is a partnership between housing associations, local authorities and the West Midlands Police Force. The aim of the partnership is to co-operate in the development of policies to improve the effectiveness of both the police and social landlords like Nehemiah UCHA in tackling the problems of crime and harassment on estates. These agencies will be working together with residents to make the community a better place to live. Information will be passed between these agencies if a tenant is suspected of committing any act of anti-social behaviour, crime, harassment or vandalism.

Landscaped Areas and Play Areas

We need your help to keep the estates pleasant places in which to live and stamp out vandalism. Please report all incidents of vandalism to us. You should also report all incidents of vandalism to the police. You could discuss with your local Police Crime Prevention Officer whether you and your neighbours could set up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. We spend a lot of money on looking after the landscaping on your estates, and many of you will also

be paying a service charge towards this cost. It is therefore in your interest to ensure that the landscaped areas are kept clean and shrubs and trees are not vandalised. On most grassed areas, the playing of ball games is not permitted. Some areas have play areas provided for the use of young children. Please do not allow your children to damage these areas.

Paying your rent

It is important that you contact your Housing Officer if you have difficulty with your rent payments. Nehemiah UCHA will be sympathetic, and will help you make a realistic arrangement to clear your debt. Remember to inform your Housing Officer if you lose your job or your circumstances change in any way. We can help you to sort out your rent account before the arrears become unmanageable, and we may be able to help you claim any benefits to which you are entitled. If you have made an arrangement to repay your arrears, please tell us if you need to renegotiate it. Don't stop paying without contacting us.

Your rights and obligations

It is your responsibility to pay your rent and other charges each and every week. Payments may be made at any Post Office using your Giro Card or book, or by standing order, or by calling into Nehemiah UCHA office at 5 Beacon Court, Great Barr, Birmingham. If you are in receipt of housing benefit, it is still your responsibility to ensure that your rent is paid.

If you fail to pay your rent when it is due, Nehemiah UCHA can apply to the court for your tenancy to be ended and for you and anyone residing with you to be evicted from the premises. Nehemiah UCHA will serve a Notice Seeking Possession on all tenants who owe four weeks rent. If you are served with a Notice you should contact your Housing Officer immediately to avoid further legal action. If your case is referred to court to obtain a Suspended Possession Order, then you will also incur court costs of at least £150.

If you are in receipt of partial housing benefit you must ensure that you make payments of your portion of the rent. If you are a joint tenant then you are jointly and severally (individually) responsible for the rent and any arrears. This means that if one of the joint tenants leaves then the remaining tenant is responsible for the rent and all of any rent arrears that have accrued on the property.

Housing Benefit

Housing Benefit is a scheme to help you pay your rent if you are on a low income. The amount of help you get depends on your income, the size of your family and how much rent you pay. You do not have to be out of work or have no savings to qualify. If you are claiming Income Support you must also complete a Housing Benefit form to ensure that you do not lose benefit. Remember that if you are receiving Housing Benefit, you must always complete a renewal form when one is sent to you, otherwise you will lose benefit. Housing Benefit is payable on your rent and service charges, but not on any other charges. Please note that if you are entitled to Family Credit and have not made a claim, Housing Benefit will take into account the amount you would be entitled to receive. It is therefore in your own interests to make a claim.

You have a statutory right to an explanation of how your entitlement is worked out. If you require one, contact your local Housing Benefit office. You must inform Housing Benefit of any change in your circumstances, for example, if you have an increase or decrease in your wages or benefits, or if anyone else comes to live in your household. If your circumstances change then you may receive an overpayment of Housing Benefit, which will be either reclaimed from your ongoing benefit or in the form of a lump sum to be paid through your rent account. Do not allow anyone to use your address to claim their benefit or giro, as it will affect your entitlement to Housing Benefit and council tax benefit. The person will be deemed to be living at your address, and a deduction will be made from your Housing Benefit.

The rules for claiming housing benefit have recently changed. To claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax you will need to:

- provide National Insurance numbers, not only for yourself, but for anyone else for whom you are claiming, such as your partner and any children

- aged 16 to 19 who are in full time education.
- provide two proofs of identity, such as your benefit payment book, birth certificate, driving licence, a current, valid passport, wage slips, credit cards, medical card or your most recent utility bill (electricity, gas or water) if it is paid in your name.

- provide proof of Income, such as your benefit book, wage slips or bank or building society book
- take your original documents to the Housing Benefit Office, where they will be photocopied and returned to you. If you are elderly or disabled you can telephone, or ask the Scheme Manager to telephone the Housing Benefit office and ask for Visiting Officer to call and see you.
- give the Housing Benefit Office all the information they request within 28 days of the claim, otherwise your claim will be cancelled

If you wish Nehemiah UCHA to liaise with the Housing Benefits on your behalf you will be requested to sign an authorisation form. You will also be requested to sign a form to have your Housing Benefit paid directly to Nehemiah UCHA. Remember to ask for a receipt when you return your Housing Benefit form. This is your proof that you have made an application. It is your responsibility to claim any benefit to which you are entitled, and to ensure that your rent is paid.

Money Advice

If you are finding it difficult to make ends meet, help is available from Nehemiah UCHA. Contact us if you have problems with:

- **Rent**
- **Council Tax**
- **Water Rates**
- **Electricity/ Gas**

- **Court Order**
- **Credit Companies**

You can also get free impartial and confidential advice from your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Managing your tenancy

Security of tenure

You are an assured tenant of your home if it can be described as a separate dwelling and as long as you occupy it as your only and principal home. If your house or flat ceases to be your only or principal home, you will lose your security of tenure, and Nehemiah UCHA may terminate your tenancy by serving a Notice to Quit and commencing court action for possession of your home. You will also cease to be an Assured Tenant if:

- you sublet or part with possession of the whole of the premises or first sublet part of it and then the remainder.
- you breach the terms of a Suspended Possession Order e.g. you fail to maintain the agreed arrangement

Some tenancies are not assured, these include:

- certain Service Tenancies
- hostel or shared accommodation
- leased dwellings

You have the right to occupy the premises as long as your tenancy lasts. Tenancies signed before January 1989 are called secure tenancies. Your legal rights are similar to those of assured tenants. Please contact your Housing Officer if you require further information.

Termination of tenancy

Nehemiah UCHA cannot terminate your tenancy without having obtained a Possession Order through the Court on one or more of the grounds laid down in the legislation. These include failing to comply with your obligations as laid down in your Tenancy Agreement (Tenancy Conditions) The first stage in proceedings for possession of your home is the service of a Notice of Intention to Seek Possession.

This is an important document that sets out the reasons why a Notice has been served. Any Notice served on you by Nehemiah UCHA under the Tenancy Agreement or the Housing Act 1988 as amended by Section 148, Housing Act 1996 will be taken as being properly served if it is left for you at your last address or at the property let to you.

Right to Repair

You have the right to carry out certain categories of repairs which are Nehemiah UCHA's responsibility if you have reported the repair in writing to Nehemiah UCHA and without good reason Nehemiah UCHA has not carried out the repair within 28 days of receiving your written notice. You are also entitled to compensation if you report a

repair or maintenance problem that affects your health, safety, or security and Nehemiah UCHA fails twice to carry out the repair within the set timescale. There is a flat rate award of £10.00 plus £2.00 a day up to a maximum of £50, for each day the repair remains outstanding.

Emergency repairs

Where circumstances are within the Association's control and there is either no sanitation/water or electricity then payment will be made at the rate of £5.00 per facility for each 24 hours AFTER the first 24 hours.

This does not include work where the fault is the failure of a utility company (gas, electricity or water) to maintain a service or supply.

Urgent repairs

After 5 working days, a payment of £5.00 up to a maximum of £50 will be made for each 24 hours where: There is no heating of any type to the main living room (October to April) There is no hot water There is no access to washing facilities There is no access to cooking facilities There is no access to sanitary facilities

The Association may choose to pay the cost of running supplies of heating and hot water over and ABOVE the normal running cost. If you are in arrears of your rent payments or owe money for a rechargeable repair, any compensation will be paid directly into your rent or maintenance account.

Improvements and Alterations

You have the right to carry out improvements to your home, including any alteration or addition to it. You will need Nehemiah UCHA's prior written permission, which will not be unreasonably withheld. You also need Nehemiah UCHA permission to erect: fences, sheds, greenhouses, pigeon lofts or aviaries, garages. You may also need to obtain Planning and Building Control Regulations approval from your local council for any of these works. You should make your request for permission for any improvement or alteration in writing and Nehemiah UCHA will respond within 28 days. You may not erect a satellite dish on a block of flats. If you leave your home, you may be able to claim compensation for certain specified improvements you have carried out, provided you had written permission from Nehemiah UCHA before you carried out the work. This claim must be made in writing either 28 days before the tenancy comes to an end or within 14 days after the tenancy has come to an end. Qualifying improvements may include the installation or replacement of:

Baths
Showers
Wash basins

Toilets
Kitchen sinks
Storage cupboards in bathroom or kitchen
Work surfaces for food preparation
Space or water heating
Thermostatic radiator valves
Pipes, water tanks or cylinders
Loft insulation
Cavity wall insulation
Draught proofing of external doors or windows
Double glazing or other window replacement or secondary glazing
Rewiring or the provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings
Security measures (excluding burglar alarms)

Compensation payable is based on the notional life of the installation. It will also take account of the cost, quality and dilapidation of the installation. If any money is owed to Nehemiah UCHA for rent or for any rechargeable repair, then this will be deducted from any compensation payable. If you carry out any alteration and cause damage to your home, then you will be required to put the damage right yourself or alternatively Nehemiah UCHA will do the work for you and you will be recharged the full cost.

Repairs and improvements

How to report a repair

Some repairs are Nehemiah UCHA responsibility and some are yours. You must report any repair which is our responsibility to us as soon as possible. If you are in any doubt as to who is responsible, report it to us and we will advise you. Nehemiah UCHA aims to carry out all repairs for which it is responsible quickly and efficiently.

All repair requests must be reported on following number:

0845 840 7400

8am - 6pm Monday to Friday

You can also call this number to enquire about a repair that has not yet been completed. All calls are charged at local rate.

Emergency out-of-hours repairs should be reported by calling 08457 573 842.

When you report a repair you will be sent a receipt with a job number on it. Please keep the receipt and quote the job number if you have a query. Please return the card to us with any comments, once the work has been completed.

Priority definitions

Each type of repair has a priority rating and target time within which we would expect to complete the repair:

EmergencyTarget time - 24 hours

Where there is danger to life or limb or serious structural damage to your home. The aim will be to remove the immediate danger.

UrgentTarget time - 5 working days

Where there is a need to safeguard the security and safety of a home and the occupier.

Non-UrgentTarget time - 28 working days

All other repairs for which Nehemiah UCHA is responsible.

In some cases, it will be necessary for a member of the Association's staff to inspect the defect before ordering the work. If a pre-works inspection is necessary, it will be carried out within 5 days of the repair being reported. The time period for the repair will, in these cases, commence from the day the inspection was carried out.

Nehemiah UCHA cannot accept liability for damage to your personal belongings or furniture as a result of accidental building failures, flooding or fires, unless it is legally proved that the Association or its

contractors were negligent. In the case of damage occurring whilst contractors are carrying out works on the Association's behalf due to the proven negligence of the association or its contractors then the Association will ensure that the damage is made good or the tenant is compensated.

In certain situations, Nehemiah UCHA may require access to your property to carry out work which is affecting an adjoining property. You will be given prior warning that we are coming unless it is an emergency, when you are required to allow access. If an emergency repair needs to be carried out to your property, and access is required immediately, then it may be necessary to force entry. In these cases, your property will be resecured, and you will be informed of the work that was carried out. It is essential that your Gas Central heating is serviced annually and it is in your own interests to ensure that this is done. If access cannot be obtained after several requests have been made, then it may be necessary to force entry to carry out this work. You will be given at least 24 hours notice of this event, and will be able to make an alternative appointment if necessary.

Your Rights and Obligations

You are responsible for maintaining certain items within your home and for carrying out certain repairs. If you are in any doubt as to who is responsible for the repair, report it to us and we will advise you. You may have to pay for the repair of anything damaged by you or your visitors, or items requiring repair due to neglect or unreasonable behaviour. Broken glass and window locks may be repaired by Nehemiah UCHA but will be rechargeable to you if

the repair is necessary because of your default. There is a scheme of reduced charges for the elderly and the disabled. Any maintenance charge may be repaid by installments. Charges may be waived for repairs which have been made necessary by harassment, break-ins or vandalism, if the incident has been reported to the police and you have an incident or crime number.

Use of the premises

You must use the premises as a home for yourself and your family and anyone that you invite to stay with you. You must not allow your home to become overcrowded. If you intend to stay away from your home temporarily for any period in excess of 4 weeks, you must notify Nehemiah UCHA before you leave, stating:

- the dates you intend to leave and return
- the arrangements you have made for the payment of your rent and the care of your home

If you are unable to give prior notice due to circumstances beyond your control, you should contact Nehemiah UCHA as soon as possible with this information. Nehemiah UCHA has the right to enter and inspect your home to ensure that you are complying with the Tenancy Conditions, and will normally give at least 24 hours notice of the visit.

Lodgers and sub-letting

You may take a lodger without the permission of Nehemiah UCHA so long as your home does not become overcrowded.

You may sub-let part of your home with Nehemiah UCHA's prior written permission.

You may not sub-let or part with the whole of your home. If you do so, you will be giving up your security of tenure and no longer be an assured tenant.

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit, you must notify the Council immediately of any new occupants, and the date they moved into your home.

Your benefit may be reduced, requiring you to pay higher amount of rent each week. Your Council Tax may also be affected.

If you require your lodger or sub-tenant to leave, it is your responsibility to arrange this, which you must do by lawful methods.

If they refuse to leave your home you should seek the advice of a solicitor.

Succession

Where the tenancy is in your name only, the tenancy will automatically pass to your spouse or a person living with you as your partner in the event of your death, providing that he or she was living with you at the time of your death and the property is his or her only or principal home.

No one else has the automatic right to take over your tenancy, however Nehemiah UCHA will normally offer a tenancy to a member of your household who:

- has been living with you for the year before your death or
- has accepted responsibility for your dependants and
- is 18 years of age or older

If the tenant or joint tenant of the property you occupy dies, please inform Nehemiah UCHA as soon as possible. If you are in receipt of housing benefit, this change in circumstances may also affect your entitlement. You may receive increased benefit or in certain cases your benefit may decrease.

The Housing Benefits Department will claim back any overpayment from your housing benefit either by reducing your ongoing benefit or by a lump sum. If you were not previously entitled to Housing Benefit you may now be eligible.

If you are not the spouse, or the partner of the tenant who has died (for example, if you are a son or daughter, or other relative) then Nehemiah UCHA may offer you alternative accommodation, if the existing accommodation is too large for your needs, or if you are living in a property which is in a sheltered scheme or has been adapted for the disabled, and there is no one in the household who needs such specialist accommodation. In such cases, Nehemiah UCHA may refer your case to the County Court to obtain a Possession Order but will have to be able to offer you suitable alternative accommodation.

Assignments and granting of tenancies

If two joint tenants decide they can no longer live together, Nehemiah UCHA cannot normally transfer the tenancy into one partner's sole name unless the other signs over the tenancy voluntarily.

You may assign the tenancy but only:

- if you are exchanging with another tenant with the written consent of Nehemiah UCHA
- if you are assigning it to a person who would qualify as a successor in the event of your death.
- if you are ordered to do so by the court under Matrimonial Law

If you have a particular problem, for example if you are suffering from mental or physical abuse, please contact your Housing Officer who may be able to help and assist you.

You are advised not to give up your rights to your tenancy without seeking professional advice.

Joint Tenancies

If you have a sole tenancy and wish to have a joint tenancy with someone who lives with you, Nehemiah UCHA will grant the request if:

both the people sign a letter requesting a joint tenancy and the person asking to be a joint tenant has lived with the sole tenant for 6 months or more and can provide evidence of this fact and the person asking to be a joint tenant has no interest in

any other property (does not rent or own another property either solely or jointly)

In the case of a marriage, a copy of the marriage certificate is sufficient and the 6-month rule does not apply. However, Nehemiah UCHA will not grant a joint tenancy to any tenant where a suspended Possession Order has been obtained until the grounds for possession no longer apply.

Ending your tenancy

You can end your tenancy by giving 4 weeks written notice of termination, expiring on a Monday. However, we will often accept a shorter period. In all cases, Nehemiah has the right to carry out an inspection of your property prior to your leaving.

Do not abandon your home, as you will be responsible for any rent outstanding or any damage to the property up to the date that Nehemiah UCHA finds out the property is empty. If you have to leave at short notice, please hand your keys into any of the following offices:

Keys must be handed in by 12.00 noon on a Monday or you will be liable for a further week's rent. Nehemiah UCHA reserves the right to remove and/or destroy any articles left in the premises after you have vacated, and to recover from you the cost of storage of any items prior to collection by you and the cost of disposing of any items if you do not collect them.

Nehemiah UCHA
5 Beacon Court
Great Barr
Birmingham
B43 6NN

Charles Pearson Court
Mill Drive
Smethwick
West Midlands
B66 3HW

McCalla House
Laburnum Street
Graisely
Wolverhampton
WV3 0BT

Nehemiah Court
38 Bath Road
Caldmore
Walsall
WS1 3BS

Henry Court
Charlton Street
Dudley
DY1 3AF

Alternatively you may post them, clearly labelled to Nehemiah UCHA's office at 5 Beacon Court.

Safety in the Home

There are many simple steps you can take to avoid accidents in the home:

- Know where your stop tap is (ask your Housing Officer if in doubt)
- Make sure you know the location of all overflow pipes.
- Report any running overflows to us as they can cause damage to your property.

- Do not take electrical appliances to the bathroom
- Do not overload power points
- Do not leave things lying about, particularly on the stairs.
- Make sure a properly secured handrail is fitted from the top to the bottom of your stairs.

Insurance

As the Landlord, Nehemiah UCHA is responsible for insuring the structure of your home, but is not responsible for insuring your household possessions.

You are advised to take out your own household contents insurance policy to cover your furniture and household possessions against fire, flood or theft.

Pets

You do not need permission to keep a dog or a cat or other domestic pets in a house or bungalow. You will need to provide suitable accommodation for the keeping on any non-domestic pets, for example, pigeons. Please ensure that dogs are not allowed to roam outside your property, and that none of your animals cause a nuisance to other residents.

Avoid leaving dogs unattended for long periods, to prevent persistent barking which may annoy your neighbours.

You are responsible for any damage or defacement caused to the premises, communal areas and common parts of the estate by your pets. Ensure that you clear your garden regularly of any mess made by your dog. Some local authorities will have bylaws that prohibit the fouling of streets, pavements and grass verges.

We will not grant permission for:

- the keeping of a dog defined as dangerous for the purposes of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
- the keeping of any animal of a species protected by law

It is a legal requirement that all dogs wear a collar and tag containing the owner's name and address. Many Local Authorities employ Dog Wardens who have powers to take away any stray dogs. They will not normally be returned unless a substantial fee is paid.

Hallways and Landings

If you live in a block of flats with a communal entrance, keep the entrance hall and landings free. The entrance hall and landings must not be used for storage of personal belongings or the passageways obstructed in any way.

Fire Safety

Fire and smoke can spread very quickly, can cause extensive damage, and can be life threatening. If you smell smoke, or suspect a fire, leave your home immediately, taking all members of your family with you. Use a neighbour's phone to contact the Fire Brigade. Do not re-enter your home, for any reason, until the Fire Officer in charge tells you it is safe to do so. Remember that you are responsible for insuring your personal belongings. Nehemiah UCHA is not liable for any damage caused by fire to your household contents or furniture.

Remember:

- Do not leave pans unattended on your cooker
- Unplug electrical equipment at night, including electric blankets
- Do not cover heaters
- Fit smoke alarms and check batteries regularly
- Do not store petrol, oxygen, calor gas cylinders or any inflammable material in your flat or bin store
- Ensure that all fire doors are kept closed
- Do not interfere with fire extinguishers or any fire or smoke alarms.
- Keep all access roads clear and unobstructed at all times

Frost Protection

You can take simple steps to avoid a range of winter problems:

In cold weather, turn taps off fully and leave the plug in sinks and wash basins to avoid frozen or burst pipes. Prevent frost damage by keeping your home reasonably warm both day and night, and ensure that all exposed

water pipes, particularly in the roof space, are insulated. If you go away, turn off the stop tap and drain off the cold and hot water systems. Ask for advice from your Housing Officer if necessary. You may be liable for any damage if you do not take adequate precautions.

Gardens

You should keep your garden tidy and free from rubbish. Do not erect fences or plant trees without permission from Nehemiah UCHA. Trees planted near buildings can cause major damage to the foundations.

There is no need for you to accumulate rubbish in your garden. Many Councils provide a service for the collection of bulky items. If you have a wheelie bin, you may be able to be put your garden rubbish into it.

Gas Leaks

If you smell gas, phone Transco on 0800 111 999 and take the following precautions:

- **Switch off the gas supply**
- **Open doors and windows**
- **Do not use a naked light**
- **Do not use electrical switches**

Your rights

Your Right to Personal Information

You have the right to inspect certain information about yourself and your tenancy, which may be held on file or on computer. In some cases, Nehemiah UCHA is entitled by law to withhold access to information. If you wish to see your file, you should request an appointment to do so in writing. We will give you information about our performance including rents charged, levels of arrears, the length of time repairs take, the cost of repairs and maintenance and the number of empty properties. This information will be provided annually.

Nehemiah UCHA has a statutory duty to provide

information regarding your tenancy to certain agencies. Information will only be passed on in the following circumstances:

- to other local authorities where common waiting lists are maintained
- to agencies who are signatories to the Safer Estates Agreement, if you are deemed to be in breach of your conditions of tenancy.
- to a local authority or housing association to improve your opportunities of alternative accommodation

Your right to courtesy

If you are dissatisfied with any service or the actions of a member of Nehemiah UCHA staff, please ask to speak to the Director of Housing Services, or put your complaint in writing.

We would ask that you remain courteous to our staff and are not abusive or violent towards them. Any such behaviour does not solve the problem in hand and is likely to result in police attendance.

Any member of staff experiencing abusive or violent

behaviour from a customer will be fully supported by Nehemiah UCHA in any legal proceedings that may follow. We value our customers and aim to provide them with a quality service. If you are dissatisfied with our service, please let us know. We will attempt to resolve the issue as quickly as possible and in a polite and courteous manner.

Your right to be consulted

You have the right to be consulted on the following issues:

- changes in the management or maintenance of your home, such as changes in the way services are contracted out planned improvements or major repairs to your home or estate
- circumstances where your home may have to be demolished or where it may have to be transferred to another landlord

This consultation will be carried out in advance of any changes being made, and you will be given feedback when decisions about such issues are reached. We will also consult you about the services you receive and would like to receive, and about the standards of the services which Nehemiah UCHA provides. Consultation is usually carried out through tenant satisfaction surveys, questionnaires, or specially organised meetings.

Your right to be involved

Nehemiah UCHA believes that a quality housing service can only be provided through a partnership approach between itself and its tenants. We will consult you both individually and through tenant organisations about our policies, procedures and service delivery.

We will actively encourage and assist the development of representative residents associations and will work with them to achieve their goals.

Section three: **Your home**

Complaints and appeals

If you are dissatisfied with an action or decision concerning your tenancy, you should first talk to the person dealing with your case.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of this discussion, you should then speak to the Housing Services Manager or Director, or alternatively put your complaint to them in writing.

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome, your case will be put before the Housing Management Committee. If you feel that Nehemiah UCHA fails to deal with your complaint or continues not to keep to the terms of your tenancy then you can get advice and information about

your legal rights from a solicitor, or a Citizens Advice Bureau.

Alternatively, you can complain to the Housing Association Ombudsman, who has powers to investigate the complaint if he or she thinks Nehemiah UCHA has acted improperly.

You can contact the Ombudsman at:

Housing Ombudsman

81 Aldwych

London

W13 4HN

Allocations and transfers

Allocations

The local authorities in whose areas Nehemiah UCHA has accommodation have a right to nominate applicants for 50% of the vacancies. Other allocations are assessed on a points scheme according to housing need.

The type of accommodation you will be offered depends on the size of your family. For further information ask for the booklet Allocation Policy: A guide for applicants”.

Transfers

Any tenant may apply to register for a transfer, but priority is given to those who currently occupy accommodation which is unsuitable for their needs. Tenants in rent arrears will only be transferred in

exceptional circumstances.

An inspection of your current property will be carried out to ensure that the property can be relet to another applicant with minimal cost to Nehemiah UCHA.

Mutual Exchanges

Subject to the prior written consent of Nehemiah UCHA, you have the right to exchange your tenancy, by assignment, with that of another tenant of a registered housing association, local authority or new town. Nehemiah UCHA's consent will only be withheld on specific grounds, which will be explained to you. If you find someone you wish to exchange with, you should collect the necessary form from Nehemiah UCHA to apply for permission. If you move without following the correct procedure you may lose your security of tenure.

If you have rent arrears or you are otherwise in breach of your conditions of tenancy, consent will only be given subject to a condition that the arrears are cleared or the breach of tenancy remedied.

There are circumstances in which the exchange may be refused, for example, if the property is too small or too large for your family.

Nehemiah UCHA will not be liable for any costs arising from the exchange, or any repairs or decoration which are the tenant's responsibility.

Moving out of the area

You can apply to move to another area if you have a genuine reason for moving such as a job or in order to give or receive support from a relative.

About your home

Cars

You must not park a car or caravan in your garden unless a properly constructed hardstanding and vehicular access has been provided. If you wish to carry out these works, you must apply to Nehemiah UCHA for permission. Whilst you may need to make minor repairs to your vehicle, you should not carry out welding or spraying of your vehicle nor carry out car repairs to other vehicles visiting your home.

Do not park your car on grass verges, or grassed areas.

Do not leave untaxed or unroadworthy vehicles in parking areas, as your local council may take action to remove them and charge you for the cost of removal and disposal.

Remember you have no legal right to a parking place in the road outside your home. Parking bays are designated for the use of all residents and their visitors. Be reasonable in your use of parking bays and park correctly. Please consider other residents when parking, or if you are having a number of visitors.

Condensation

Every home gets condensation at some time, usually when lots of moisture and steam are being produced, for instance, at bath times, when the main meal is being cooked or when clothes are being washed. If there is a difference between the inside and outside air temperatures, it is quite normal to find your bedroom windows misted up in the morning.

To beat condensation you need more heat, more ventilation and less water in the air.

It is important that you heat your home properly and ensure adequate ventilation to reduce condensation. You can take simple steps to avoid or reduce the problem:

Bottled gas, and paraffin heaters cause a lot of condensation, so allow extra ventilation.

Drying clothes indoors, particularly on radiators can increase condensation unless you open a window to allow the air to circulate.

Tumble dryers must be vented to the outside.

Keep kitchen and bathroom doors shut particularly when cooking, washing or bathing and open the window a little, otherwise water vapour will spread right through your home and condensation will probably affect other rooms.

If you get a growth of mould, then wash down the affected surfaces with a bleach solution.

Door Entry Systems

Many blocks of flats have door entry systems, which are provided to give residents additional security. Visitors may only be allowed entry by the householder activating the remotely operated electronic door keep.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you do not admit anyone who is not known to you. You should not prop open the main entrance door, as this may allow unwanted visitors to enter the building.