

# Supported housing Residents' handbook



### What's inside...

	raye
Welcome to Outward	4
How we work	5
Your tenancy agreement or licence agreement	6
Joint tenancies	6
Sub-letting	6
If you are away from home	6
Pets	6
Insurance	7
Household pests	7
Harassment	7
Noise and nuisance	7
What is anti-social behaviour?	8
Anti-social behaviour	8
Ending your tenancy or licence agreement	9
Paying your rent and service charges	10
Paying your rent and service charges on time	10
Rent increase or decrease	10
What you should do when your rent changes	10
Secure tenants	11
Service charges	11
Utility bills	11
TV licence	11
How to pay your rent and service charge	12
Difficulties in paying the rent and service charge	13
Rent statements	13
Rent and service charge arrears	13
Your rent statement explained	15

	Page
Landlord, Outward and tenant repairs and maintenance	16
Who does what in maintenance?	16
The landlord	16
Outward	17
The tenant's repairs responsibilities - what you need to do	17
Reporting repairs	19
Information we need	19
Giving access	20
Identification (ID)	20
What is an 'emergency repair'?	20
Repairs treated as an emergency	20
Non-urgent repairs/routine	21
Useful information about your home	22
Gas safety	
Fire safety	23
Electrical safety	23
Condensation and mould	24
Energy saving tips	25
How to complain	26
What if you want to make a complaint?	26
What will happen when you complain?	
What to do if you are still not happy	27
Resident and tenant involvement	27
How to contact the Outward Housing Team	28



#### **Welcome to Outward**

On behalf of Outward, the Housing Team would like to welcome you to your new home. This handbook has lots of useful information about Outward and the registered housing providers that we work with. It is also full of useful information about the services the Housing Team deliver and your rights and responsibilities as a tenant or licencee.

#### How we work

Outward's Housing Team provide a comprehensive service that aims to sustain tenancies. We work closely with a number of registered housing providers and alongside our Group partner, Newlon Housing Trust, to provide housing services to our supported housing properties.

We are proud to have provided housing and support to vulnerable people across north and east London for over 40 years, including people with learning disabilities, people with mental health issues, older people who need support and care and young people in housing need.







#### Your tenancy agreement or licence agreement

All residents living in a home managed by Outward will have a tenancy agreement or licence agreement. It is a legal document that sets out the responsibilities and duties of Outward, the landlord and you as the tenant.



#### Joint tenancies

Joint tenancies are usually given where two adults have applied together for housing. Joint tenants have equal rights and are equally responsible for keeping the conditions of the tenancy.

#### **Sub-letting**

You must not leave your home and rent it or hand the keys to someone else.

Outward will take legal action to take back (repossess) homes where this happens, as we have to make sure that all homes are let to people with a supported housing need.

#### If you are away from home

If you are away from your home for 30 days or more, you must tell your Housing Support Officer or Tenancy Management Officer.

If Outward has good grounds to consider that a property has been left empty and the resident will not be returning, Outward will start legal action to repossess the property and the resident will be responsible for the rent arrears until the property is repossessed.

#### **Pets**

If you wish to keep a pet, you must first get written permission from Outward.

If you do have permission to keep a pet, it should not be allowed to foul in shared areas and gardens. If nuisance is caused to your neighbours, you may be asked to find your pet a new home. You can get a copy of Outward's pet policy from your Housing Support Officer or Tenancy Management Officer

#### **Insurance**

You are responsible for insuring the contents of your home and your possessions against accidental breakages, flood, fire and theft. You may lose everything without compensation if you are not insured.

#### **Household pests**

You are responsible for dealing with household pests such as ants, wasps, cockroaches, bedbugs, rats and mice in your flat. If you cannot deal with these or suspect that you have an infestation, in the first instance speak to your Support Worker, Housing Support Officer or Tenancy Management Officer for advice.

#### Harassment

Outward does not tolerate any form of harassment. We will offer support to victims of harassment and will take action against any resident who harasses others for whatever reason. Every resident is entitled to live peacefully and enjoy their home without their safety being threatened by their neighbours or anyone else.

#### Noise and nuisance

It is a condition of your tenancy or licence agreement that you, your friends and visitors do not cause a nuisance or create a disturbance.

Outward expect residents to show consideration to others, especially in blocks of flats and where there are shared areas and entrances.

Everyone should keep noise to a minimum, especially early in the morning and late at night.

#### What is anti-social behaviour?

Anti-social behaviour is behaviour which has caused or is likely to cause harassment, alarm and distress or serious on-going nuisance or annoyance to people.



#### **Anti-social behaviour**

Outward takes all anti-social behaviour seriously and will use a full range of remedies to deal with any incidents. These will include warning letters, acceptable behaviour contracts, injunctions and, in very serious and persistent cases, eviction. We work and share information with other agencies including the police, social services and local authorities in order to find ways of dealing with anti-social behaviour.

We will investigate all complaints thoroughly and quickly. We will take effective action including monitoring, mediation and applying for injunctions against the perpetrator if necessary.

If you experience any form of anti-social behaviour contact your Support Worker, Housing Support Officer or Tenancy Management Officer.

#### **Ending your tenancy or licence agreement**

To end your tenancy agreement or licence agreement, you must give Outward four weeks' notice. This must be in writing and must end on a Sunday. If you are transferring to another property or there are good reasons why you cannot give Outward four weeks' notice, we may allow you to give a shorter notice period. This can only be agreed with a member of the Housing Management Team. You will be charged rent for the full four weeks unless you have received such an agreement, in writing.

Keys must be handed in before 12 noon on the day after your tenancy or licence ends. You can hand the keys to your Support Worker, Housing Support Officer or your Tenancy Management Officer. You must not leave anyone else in the property.

If you keep the keys after this time, you will be charged with the additional rent and the cost of fitting a new lock, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

You must leave the property in a clean and tidy condition and free from all personal belongings. You must also arrange to have the gas and electricity meters read and for the telephone, internet and any television packages you pay for to be disconnected.

#### Paying your rent and service charges

#### Paying your rent and service charges on time

In return for living in your home and receiving services, you are responsible for making sure the rent and service charge is paid. Rent is due in advance on the Monday of each week. Any payment not made on time will be treated as arrears. Even if you receive housing benefit, you are still responsible for making sure that you do not fall behind with your rent.



When you sign your tenancy or licence agreement, the Housing Support Officer, Tenancy Management Officer or Income Management Officer will help you complete the first housing benefit form. You will then be responsible for making sure the housing benefit office has all the information they need. If you have a Support Worker or Housing Support Officer, they can help you do this.

#### Rent increase or decrease

If you have an assured tenancy, an assured shorthold tenancy or a licence agreement, the landlord sets your rent by applying a rent increase or decrease in accordance with the government direction to the regulator, currently the Regulator of Social Housing. The rent is reviewed every year.

Before we change your rent, we will give you **one** month's written notice. Outward usually increases or decreases the rent in April or October.

#### What you should do when your rent changes

If you receive housing benefit, you must take a copy of your rent letter to your local housing benefit office as proof that your rent is about to change. You should do this as soon as you get the letter and **before** the change in rent is due.

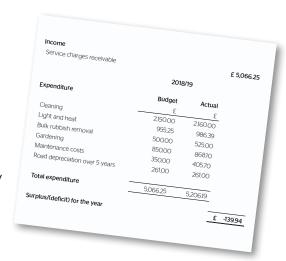
If you pay your own rent, you must increase or decrease your payments from the date advised in your rent letter. If you have a Support Worker or Housing Support Officer, they can help you do this.

#### **Secure tenants**

If you are a secure tenant, your rent is generally a fair rent registered by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) Rent Officer. The landlord suggests the rent they want to charge and the Rent Officer decides if this is fair. This can only happen every two years.

#### **Service charges**

Sometimes Outward adds service charges in addition to the basic rent to cover the costs of additional services you enjoy. Service charges are set according to the cost of the services provided. The services are listed at the back of your tenancy agreement and may include communal garden maintenance and cleaning of communal areas.



Service charges are usually reviewed annually. If a change to the service charge is necessary, you will be given **four** weeks' notice in writing before any changes are made. We aim to keep the service charges as low as possible whilst providing a good service.

#### **Utility bills**

Utility bills include gas, electricity and water charges. The utility bills that you will be expected to pay are different at each property. In some properties the utilities may be included in your service charge. In other properties you may be expected to pay for your utilities direct to the utility suppliers. Your Housing Support Officer or Tenancy Management Officer will explain when you view the property which utility bills you will be directly responsible for.

#### **TV licence**

If you live in a self-contained flat, you will be expected to pay for your own television licence. If there are shared areas and a television is provided as part of the service charge, a television licence will be purchased as part of the service charges.

#### How to pay your rent and service charge

There are a number of ways in which you can pay your rent and service charge. When you meet with your Housing Support Officer, Tenancy Management Officer or Income Management Officer, they will talk to you about different ways to pay.

#### You can choose a way to pay that is easiest for you:



#### **Direct Debit**

Please ask us for a direct debit form which you will need to complete and send to the Income Team. You must make sure that your rent account number is quoted in order for your rent to be correctly credited. You can also set up a direct debit over the telephone. We will ensure that your payments are amended accordingly.



#### Standing order

You can pay your rent and service charges by bank or building society standing order. You must make sure that your rent account number is quoted so that your rent payment goes into your rent account.



#### Cheque

Payment can be made by cheque at any time. Make sure you write your rent account number, name and address on the back of the cheque.



#### callpay

Just telephone the Income Management Team and they will ask you for the details of your tenancy and debit card. They will then confirm that your payment has been made.



#### allpay

You will be given an allpay card at the beginning of your tenancy or licence agreement, which you can use to make payments at any Post Office with cash, cheque or debit card.

#### Housing benefit direct

Remember to ask for your housing benefit to be paid directly to Outward.

#### Difficulties in paying the rent and service charge

If you have difficulty paying your rent, service charges or occupancy charge, or are worried about a rent increase, you should contact your Housing Support Officer or Income Management Officer. They will also be able to offer you some advice and give general information about benefits that you may be entitled to.

#### **Rent statements**

Every three months we will send you a rent statement setting out the amount you should have paid and the amount Outward has received. Your statement will show details of how much you have paid or how much you are in arrears. If you disagree with the statement or have any queries, please telephone your Income Management Officer.

#### Rent and service charge arrears

If you start to fall behind with your rent and service charge payments or if you are finding it difficult to pay them, get in touch with your Housing Support Officer or Income Management Officer, who will help and provide advice, which in most cases will avoid legal action being taken.

If you are unable to pay the arrears straight away, your Income Management
Officer will discuss with you an agreement to pay off the arrears week by week.
They will also be able to check whether you are getting the correct benefits, or put
you in touch with someone who can give specialist advice on dealing with debts.

Outward's Housing Team work hard to sustain tenancies, but if we cannot reach an agreement to pay the arrears, or if the arrears are not reducing, we will start legal action by serving a **Notice of Seeking Possession**. This means that we may go to court after the notice expires, unless the arrears are repaid or an arrangement is made to pay them. However, if we do proceed to court we may ask for a possession order, which could lead to you losing your home.

#### engaging, enabling, empowering



#### Your rent statement explained

This is a **sample** rent statement only

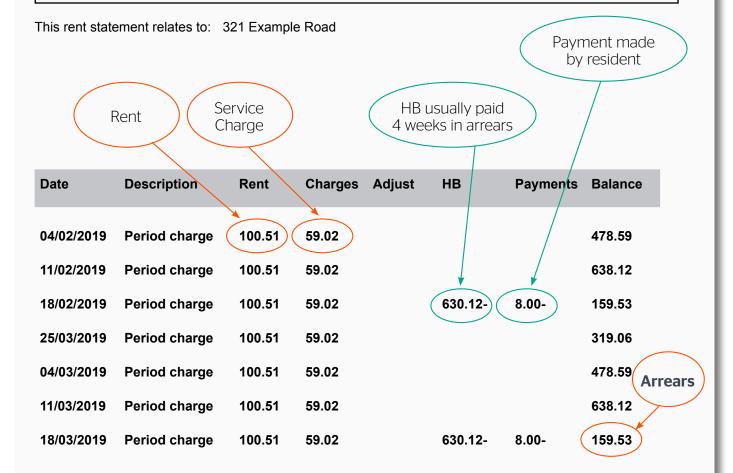
Mr A N Other 321 Example Road

Tenancy Ref: 123456

Statement from: 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Statement to: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Please Note:** Any payment made within the last seven working days may not have been taken into account. Housing Benefit can be paid up to four weeks in arrears. You may therefore have periods 'in arrears' until benefit payment is received.



Closing balance of statement £159.53 in arrears

#### Your rent statement explained

#### 'Personal details'

These are the details of who is the registered tenant at the property.

#### 'Tenancy Ref'

Is your personal six digit reference number.

#### 'Rent'

Shows detail of the rent charge per week, for your home.

#### 'Charges'

Is the total service charge due per week, for your home.

#### 'HB'

Housing benefit payments.

#### 'Arrears'

Money that is owed by you on your account.

If you would like more information about your rent statement, please speak to a member of our Income Management Team.

## Landlord, Outward and tenant repairs and maintenance

#### Who does what in maintenance?

This section will tell you what Outward can do, what your landlord can do, and what you need to do yourself. These are called responsibilities.



#### The landlord

The landlord is responsible for keeping the structure and exterior (outside) of your home in a good state of repair.

This includes:

- Drains, gutters and external pipes.
- The roof.
- Outside walls, outside doors, window sills, sash cords and window frames, including necessary external painting and decorations.
- Internal walls, floors and ceilings, back and front doors and door frames, door hinges and skirting boards, but not including internal painting and decorations.
- Chimneys, chimney stacks and flues, but not including pathways, steps or other means of access, major plasterwork, integral garages and boundary walls and fences.

The landlord will also keep in good repair and proper working order installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity and heating and hot water including:

 Basins, sinks, baths, toilets, flushing systems and waste pipes. This does not include cracked sanitary ware or blocked sinks/toilets/baths or replacement of tap washers.

- Electric wiring including sockets and switches, gas pipes and water pipes.
   This does not include replacing batteries to smoke alarms.
- Water heaters, fire places, fitted fires and central heating installations.

#### **Outward**

## Outward will carry out repair/replacement works to items purchased by Outward through service charges.

This may include:

- White goods (fridge, freezer, washing machine and cooker).
- Furniture (bed. wardrobe, chest of drawers).
- Carpets.
- Shared TV in a shared living room.
- Outward also provide a Caretaker service to carry out small repairs to communal areas within shared accommodation.

#### The tenant's repairs responsibilities - what you need to do

When accepting the offer of tenancy or licence for your home, you are agreeing to carry out some repairs in your home that are your responsibility.

Outward's Caretaker service can sometimes help with the repairs that are your responsibility.

The minor repairs that are your responsibility include:

- Internal decorations and keeping the property in good and clean condition, including decoration after minor damage, stains caused by a water leak which should be repaired within a reasonable period of time.
- Fixing small holes on inside walls and cracks to ceilings.
- Taking down/hanging curtains or curtain rails.
- Moving furniture, carpets or laminated flooring so that repairs can be made and removing rubbish or unwanted furniture.
- Replacing lost or stolen keys, renewing locks and repairing damage done as a result of locking yourself out.
- Unblocking sinks or toilets.
- Replacing toilet seats.
- Loose kitchen or bathroom tiles, sealant, cracks to basins, sinks and toilets and toilet seats.

- TV aerials (unless you pay a service charge for a shared aerial).
- Putting up shelves and any improvements/installations.
- Connections for your own washing machine/cooker etc.
- Replacement of electrical fuses, changing fuses on electric meters, doorbells, light bulbs (except in shared hallways), kitchen flourescent tubes or broken light fitments.
- Light fittings that have not been put in by the landlord.
- Broken glass (unless a crime has taken place which you have reported to the police).
- Letter boxes.
- Hinges and handles of kitchen units (including drawers) and door latches, catches, locks or handles.
- Putting in or looking after extra locks or other security on windows and doors. (We will look after Yale locks and night latches.)
- Gardening (unless you pay a service charge for a shared garden) and the removal of garden rubbish, maintenance of garden sheds and gates, including trees, shrubs and creepers.
- Outside door furniture on individual doors including door bells, knockers and letter boxes.
- Pest infestations mice, wasp nests, cockroaches, unless it affects more than one property.
- Chimney sweeping.
- Dripping/running taps this would generally include the replacement of a tap washer.
- Replacing batteries to smoke alarms.
- Any damage caused by you or your visitors.

#### **Reporting repairs**

When you notice that something needs to be repaired, you can telephone Outward or email us to let us know.

We will let you know if your repair is the landlord's or Outward's responsibility to put right, or whether it is something that you need to repair.

**Landlord repairs:** We will let the landlord know about your repair and they will contact you or your Support Worker to make an appointment.

**Outward repairs:** We will telephone the contractor and either arrange an appointment for you, or ask them to contact you or your Support Worker to arrange an appointment.

**Your repairs:** If the repair is your responsibility as part of the tenancy or licence agreement, we will let you know. If you have difficulties carrying out the repair, we can ask the Caretaker to visit to help you get this work done. The Caretaking Team **does not** provide an emergency repairs service.

If you are not able to keep an agreed appointment you must tell us as soon as possible so that another appointment can be made. Please remember if you make an appointment and then break this appointment without letting us know, you may be asked to pay for the contractor's wasted time.

#### Information we need

When you are reporting a repair, please give your name, address and telephone number. If you wish for your Support Worker to help you make an appointment, please tell us their name and telephone number.

Please tell us as clearly as possible what is wrong and where in your home the repair is. We will also need as much information as you are able to give us about the problem to help to get things fixed on the first visit. We will also ask questions to help find out exactly what the problem is and how we can help.

#### **Giving access**

It is a part of your tenancy and licence agreement that you give the Landlord's contractors access to carry out any repairs, or to inspect your home. In an emergency, the landlord will try to give at least 24 hours' notice and will try to give you a time of when to expect the contractor. For routine repairs, contractors will not visit at weekends or evenings unless there are exceptional circumstances.

#### **Identification (ID)**

You should always ask to see the contractor's or Caretaker's ID. If you are not sure, contact your Support Worker, Housing Support Officer or the Housing Team to check that the contractor or Caretaker is genuine, before letting them into your home.

#### What is an 'emergency repair'?

Emergency repairs are faults or disrepair which cause an immediate risk to your safety, your security, your health or to your home. The landlord will make an emergency repair safe within 24 hours. This may mean that they make a temporary fix to the problem and come back at a later time to make a permanent repair.

#### Repairs treated as an emergency

#### 24 hours

- Gas leaks **must** be reported to the gas emergency services.
- Total loss of water supply (where the problem is not with the supplier).
- Total loss of electricity (where the problem is not with the supplier) and where electrics have been damaged by water.
- Major plumbing leaks (where water cannot be turned off).
- Dangerous structures (e.g. ceiling falling down).
- If you cannot use the only toilet in your home (but not if the toilet is blocked).
- Total loss of heating and hot water between October and May each year where household members are disabled, elderly or vulnerable.

- Some security issues.
- The tenant is locked out due to defective locks (not lost keys).
- Blocked main drains causing back-surge of sewage.
- Part loss of water or gas supply.
- Plumbing repairs (leaks and blocked toilet if it is an external blockage).

#### Non-urgent repairs/routine

#### 20 days

- Gutters.
- Repairs to doors, window frames and floors.
- Repairs to plaster on walls and ceilings.
- Fences and gates.
- Door entry phone.
- Mechanical extractors in bathrooms and kitchens without a window.
- Rotten floor boards.

Timeframes to carry out repairs may vary from landlord to landlord.

When you report a repair to Outward's maintenance team we will advise you of the landlord's timeframe for the repair.

#### Useful information about your home

#### **Gas safety**



What to do if you suspect a gas leak:

- Put out any cigarettes, matches or naked flames.
- Turn off the gas at the meter.
- Open doors and windows.
- **Do not** turn light switches on.
- Do not use a phone or mobile phone inside your home to call for assistance.
- Telephone the gas emergency services.
   They will repair any leak from your meter or from outside your home and make it safe.
- **Telephone** the Housing Team at Outward to let them know there is a gas leak.

#### General tips on gas safety

There are some rules you can follow which help to reduce any risk:

- Never use a gas appliance that you suspect is not working properly.
- Never attempt to repair or modify a gas appliance yourself.
- **Never** cover a gas appliance or block any air vents.
- Never block an outside flue.
- Always be available when a contractor comes to service your boiler.
   Not letting the contractor service your boiler is breaking the terms of your tenancy agreement and may result in you losing your tenancy.

We recommend that a carbon monoxide detector is fitted and can provide these free of charge, if they are not already fitted at your property.



#### **Fire safety**

You can help reduce the risk of fire by following some basic safety advice:

- Make sure you know where your escape routes are in the event of a fire.
- **Never** dry clothes on cookers or heaters.
- Get a smoke alarm fitted if you do not have one already. If you need help to do this let us know and we can arrange for the Caretaker to assist.
- Never leave a candle burning in a room that is unattended.
- **Ensure** you can unlock the doors from inside.
- **Never** leave pans unattended when cooking.
- **Never** block the escape routes or fire exits.
- **Do not** smoke in bed and make sure cigarettes are completely out before leaving a room.



#### **Electrical safety**

You should be familiar with the dangers of electricity:

- Never take electrical appliances into the bathroom.
- Do not leave items on continuous charge.
- Get electrical appliances repaired by a qualified electrician – never try to fix them yourself.
- Do not overload electrical sockets and make sure appliances are correctly fused.
- Do not run electrical wires under carpets or lino where you cannot see if they start to wear out.



#### **Condensation and mould**

Condensation is moisture that is produced in all our homes. When warm air comes into contact with a cold surface, such as windows or a cold wall, the moisture in the air turns to liquid and forms droplets of water (condensation). If it is not dealt with, mould can grow which can lead to unhealthy living conditions.

In order to help prevent condensation:

- Use central heating if you have it. It is best to have the heating on low for longer.
- Wipe your windows if they become wet with condensation.
- **Open windows** where possible.
- Do not dry clothes on radiators or anywhere inside your home.
- Keep doors closed when cooking and keep lids on pots.
- Run cold water first when running a bath.



**Energy saving tips** 

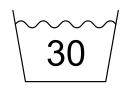
**Light bulbs** 

Change all your light bulbs for low-energy ones.



#### Turn it off!

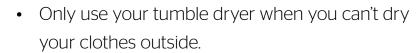
Make sure you turn off your lights, appliances and chargers when you're not using them.

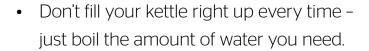


#### Careful in the kitchen

You can save money each year just by being careful how you use your kitchen appliances.









#### Turn it down!

Many households have their central heating set higher than they need it, without even realising it.

Try turning your room thermostat down by one degree.



#### How to complain

 You have every right to complain about the services you receive from Outward's Housing Team. We aim to get it right first time, but even the best organisations can get it wrong.
 When we get it wrong, we will learn from the experience and aim to improve our services.



- You have the right to complain and have your complaint taken seriously.
- It is Outward's job to hear your complaint and change things for the better.
- You will be told what we are doing about your complaint.
- Outward will help you to access an advocate if you wish. An advocate is someone from outside Outward who listens to you, helps you and speaks up for your rights.
- Sometimes complaints are small perhaps you could talk about it at a house meeting or with your Support Worker.
- Sometimes complaints are more serious. They can be about a member of staff or Outward in general.

#### What if you want to make a complaint?

- Talk to someone you trust and ask them to help you make a complaint.
- You can fill in a complaints form.
- You can also email us at complaints@outward.org.uk.
- You can phone your Support Worker or a manager in the Housing Team.

#### What will happen when you complain?

- A manager will write to you within five working days telling you that they have got your complaint and who is investigating it.
- Within ten working days of the initial response, you should receive a letter telling you what is being done about your complaint.

#### What to do if you are still not happy

- If you are still not happy after the manager has tried to help, you can appeal to the Director of Supported Housing, who will look into your complaint again.
- Finally, if you are not happy with the response from the Director of Supported Housing, you can tell Outward and this will be looked at by a case panel including a Board Member and a different Director or the CEO.
- You can go to the Case Panel meeting and take someone you trust with you if you want to.
- Everyone at the meeting will decide what to do. They may give you advice on how things can be changed or they may agree with what the Director of Supported Housing has told you.
- If you are still unhappy with how we have dealt with your complaint, you can ask another organisation to look into it.

#### Resident and tenant involvement

Resident involvement is your opportunity to 'have a say' in the services that you receive and be able to influence the decisions that affect your home.

The Housing Team need to know what you think, in order to allow us to improve services to meet your needs. You can be involved and give us your views in many different ways, including attending residents' meetings or resident and tenant committees, participating in property inspections with the

Housing Support Officer or Tenancy Management Officer or being part of an interview panel.

Whether you would like to be involved purely on a social level or would prefer to be more involved, please talk to your Support Worker, Housing Support Officer or Tenancy Management Officer.

#### How to contact the Outward Housing Team

The Outward Housing Team is based at:

**Newlon House** 

4 Daneland Walk

Hale Village

London

N17 9FE

Telephone the Housing Team on **020 7613 8017** then choose one of the following options:

**Option 1** - for maintenance or the Caretaker service.

**Option 2** - to talk about rent payments and arrears.

**Option 3** - to talk about tenancy issues.

Outward's maintenance email address is: maintenance@outward.org.uk

Outward's website address is: www.outward.org.uk

Outward's email address is: info@outward.org.uk

#### Outward is a registered charity and is a member of the Newlon Group

Newlon House, 4 Daneland Walk, Hale Village, London, N17 9FE. Tel: 020 8980 7101 | Email: info@outward.org.uk | Website: www.outward.org.uk

Regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

Company limited by guarantee. Registration number 02151434. Charity number 800529,

Registered Office: Newlon House, 4 Daneland Walk, Hale Village, London, N17 9FE.















