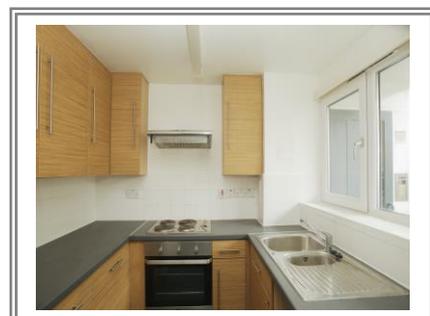


DUCANE HOUSING

Tenants Handbook



Contents

Part 1	Welcome	Page 1
Part 2	Your Tenancy	Page 3
Part 3	Your New Home	Page 6
Part 4	Your Rent and Other Charges	Page 11
Part 5	Repairs	Page 14
Part 6	Moving To Another Property	Page 17
Part 7	Safety In Your Home	Page 18
Part 8	Fair and Equal Treatment	Page 20

Contacting The Office

We are based at

11 Ducane House
101 Ducane Road
London
W12 0UR

Phone

020 8735 4990

Fax

020 8735 4991

General enquiries by email to
Website

enquiries@ducaneha.org.uk

www.ducaneha.org.uk

We're on Facebook



Office Opening Hours

Monday to Friday

9.15am to 4.30pm

** Please note that this is not a legally binding document. Nothing in this handbook Changes the legal rights and duties that are set out in your tenancy agreement.*

Part 1 Welcome

Welcome to Ducane Housing Association

We hope you will enjoy your stay with us. You will already have signed a tenancy agreement with us which sets out your legal duties as a tenant. This handbook tells you a bit more about your tenancy and our service. If you would like us to explain any points more clearly please call in to the office where we will do our best to help you. To help you settle in, our staff can give you information about the local shops, public transport. We also have leaflets on local medical facilities, schools, and childcare.

1.1 About Ducane Housing Association

We are a small, independent charity set up in 1972 to provide rented housing for people working and studying in London's hospitals and universities. Most of our tenants are from overseas. We are registered with a government agency, the Homes and Communities Agency (formerly the Tenant Services Authority) that regulates the work of housing associations. We are also a member of the National Housing Federation, the trade body for non-profit housing providers. A committee of volunteers who meet four times a year oversee our work. The committee is made up of experts in housing and other relevant professions as well as some former or current tenants. The committee agrees all our policies and is responsible for seeing that we carry out our work efficiently and within our agreed budget. Members at the annual general meeting elect the committee. Any tenant can become a member of the Association for just £1.00 and any member can stand for election to the committee. Ask for details at our office if you are interested.

1.2 Board Members

Peter Redman – Chair, Housing Specialist

Eugenie White – Former Hammersmith Councillor

Shani Mashood – IT Specialist

Simon Devitt – Freelance consultant on property managing, development and housing matters

Alexander Theaker - Customer Care, Head of Network at Winmark

Malcolm Holloway – Former Finance Director at Islington & Shoreditch HA

Richard Pudney – Development, Former Director of Project Management at Cyril Sweett

Rachel Johnson – Former Finance Director at Café Direct

1.3 Running Your Housing Service

A team of 9 Staff delivers your service. Our jobs are:

Chief Executive Mike Wilkins	Responsible for the overall running of Ducane Housing Association
Housing Services Manager Doreen Carter	Deals with tenancy matters, rent arrears and any requests for a transfer and housing applications. Will also handle any complicated queries, you may have about your tenancy.
Housing Officer Mary Bruil	Meets callers to the office, takes rent payments, and will take down details of any repairs you need done and general enquiries. Will also handle any complicated queries you may have about your tenancy. Assists the Housing Services Manager.
Finance Manager Kanti Gohill	Deals with all finance issues.
Finance Assistant Mandy Williams	Helps Finance Manager with all finance issues
Maintenance Team Leader/Decorator Junior Julian	Undertake 95% of all repairs and maintenance work in Ducane properties and communal areas
Maintenance Team Mike Hill Gavin Templeton Will Carter	Assist the Maintenance Team Leader to carry out repairs and maintenance in all Ducane properties and communal areas

Any of our staff will be happy to deal with your queries, but if your request is complex or requires specialist knowledge, we may have to refer you to another member of staff. Our staff sometimes need to attend to business outside of the office, so it may save you time if you phone first to make an appointment.

1.4 If You Have a Problem with Us: Our Complaints Procedure

If you are not happy with any aspect of our service, please contact the Housing Services Manager to explain why. If the problem is not dealt with to your satisfaction, you should ask for an appointment to see the Chief Executive Officer. If, having met the Chief Executive Officer, you are still dissatisfied, you should write to the management committee chairman at our office in Ducane Road. Full details of this procedure including complaint forms are available in the office. As a last resort, if you have gone through all three stages of our procedure, you may wish to contact the Independent Housing

Ombudsman service at 105-109 The Strand, London WC2R 0AA, tel: 020 7836 3630. The Ombudsman will not take complaints about rents or service charges unless you can prove that we made a decision wrongly. The service will not hear any complaint unless you have exhausted all the options available under our complaints procedure. If you would like help with your complaint, you can contact the local Citizen's Advice Bureau or law centre.

1.5 Your Right to See Your Files

Under the Data Protection Act 1984 you have a right to check any details about yourself, which we store on our computer system. Most of this will be about rent payments and arrears, if any. You also have a right to see information we keep about you in our files. This will include the information you put on your application form and copies of any correspondence between you and us. We would require a minimum of two weeks' notice in writing if you wish to see your file.

Part 2 Your Tenancy

2.1 The Legal Agreement

The tenancy agreement you signed when you became a tenant sets out in detail your rights and duties under the law. Please contact your Housing Services Manager if you have any questions about it.

2.2 Your Tenancy Type

If you are a student you will have what is called a 'non-secure' tenancy. If you are working you will have an Assured Shorthold tenancy. This means that your tenancy will end on the expiry date given in the tenancy agreement. Your tenancy has a fixed life because what we are offering you is temporary permission to use our property while you are studying or working. If you are a student, once your studies are over, we will want to offer the property to another student. When the expiry date has passed, we can ask you to leave. If you do not leave of your own accord we can force you to do so by serving a notice to end your tenancy. Your tenancy agreement has a clause that lets us take the property back if you cease to be a student before the date given in the agreement. You do not have the right to pass on your tenancy to anyone else. Under no conditions may you let the property to anyone else. Anyone doing so is likely to be evicted, along with his or her sub-tenants.

2.3 Swapping Your Tenancy

Because ours is a specialised and temporary housing service, we are not able to offer you some of the rights available to most tenants of other housing associations.

For example we could not let you swap your tenancy with another council or housing association tenant unless they too were a student and we might have offered them a tenancy in any case. We are also unable to take part in tenancy exchange schemes such as 'Homeswapper', set up to help tenants move elsewhere in London or Britain, because it is highly unlikely that any tenant wanting to exchange homes with you would match our tenant profile. However, we are able to offer our tenants an internal Mutual Exchange, where two tenants are requesting a transfer from one type of property to another.

2.4 Changing the dates on your Tenancy Agreement

If you cut your stay short, this should not normally cost you anything so long as you let us know one or two months in writing in advance and providing your original tenancy agreement was for more than six months. If you are a student and want to stay for longer you should send in your re-nomination application form as quickly as possible, however, please note that no extension will be granted if there are rent arrears or any other breach of tenancy. All requests for an extension to tenancy are passed to the Chief Executive for an authorisation decision. Your college should confirm your student status with us. In most cases the tenancy will be extended. But if you have already been in your property for three years we will need to discuss your circumstances with you. In this case we would not automatically agree to extend your tenancy.

2.5 Sharing Your Home

Residents in Vellacott House, where communal facilities such as kitchens are shared, are not allowed to share their home with anyone else. You are not allowed to regularly entertain guests overnight. We do not allow visitors to use the communal kitchens or other communal areas, they must remain in tenants' rooms only when visiting. This is because the communal facilities are designed to cope with a limited number of people. We do not want too many people trying to use them as this would cause problems for other tenants and means we would have to replace parts more often than we have budgeted for. We will only relax this rule in exceptional circumstances. If you think you have a special case, please discuss the matter with our Housing Services Manager.

If you live in one of our other properties and want to share your home with someone else, such as your mother and father, etc, you will need to get our permission first. Please come to the office to discuss your plans before you let anyone move in. In general we will deal with any requests sympathetically. However we would want to be sure that the arrangement you are proposing is fair and reasonable.

2.6 Other Changes to Your Tenancy

It may be possible to vary your tenancy in certain circumstances. We have the right to increase or reduce the amount of rent, Service charges and water rates (where applicable) you have to pay. There may be times when we may want to make other changes to the terms of your tenancy (students only), either as a one-off arrangement with yourself or a wider agreement with yourself and other tenants. If a change is likely to affect more than one tenant, we will only send out a formal notice about changes to the tenancy after we have discussed this with all the tenants concerned.

2.7 Consulting You about Our Housing Service

If we have any major plans to change our housing management service we will consult you first. The sort of changes we might want to make could include new ways of managing or maintaining your homes, the timing or number of services we provide or schemes to improve our properties. In each case, we would want to explain the situation, say how we propose to deal with it, and then ask for your views.

We have drawn up a list of different ways we could carry out a consultation exercise so that we can choose a method which best suits the subject matter, the amount of time available to us and the number of tenants who need to be consulted.

- a) Sending a letter - If an issue may affect all or most of you, we will probably write to you to explain the situation and ask for your views. All of our tenant letters are hand-delivered.
- b) Sending an email – this is the most requested method by tenants, we are informed.
- c) Putting a notice up on the public notice board in each block
- d) Personal visits – If the matter will only concern a small number of tenants and where individual tenants may be affected in different ways, we will arrange for our staff to visit you in person
- e) An open meeting with our staff for all tenants affected by our proposals

- f) Website and Facebook notice – an electronic notice board (Tenant Forum) on our website and also on Facebook
- g) Download the Ducane app to report a problem or repair, join our forum, apply for housing or simply read the latest news. The App can also be accessed via a link on our website.

If we write to you asking for your views on any proposed changes, we will normally ask you to reply in writing. We would usually give you 14 days to get back to us unless we have to make a decision urgently. Where we ask for a YES/NO answer or give you a choice of options, the letter may include a tear-off slip for your reply. If we hold an open meeting, we will keep a written record of all the main points made. We will consider all views put forward by tenants before making a decision and we will tell you what we have decided using one or more of the methods outlined in a) to g) above.

2.8 New Tenancies

The Housing Management Team will contact you within 4 to 6 weeks of you moving in to carry out a New Tenancy Check up Visit. This is to ensure that you have settled in well and are happy with the way we run our services and procedures. It is a good opportunity to update us of any contact details or raise any concerns or queries you may have about anything to do with your new home. It is also an opportunity for us to ascertain that your family or spouse have moved into your property with you, if applicable.

Part 3 Your New Home

You can move into your new home on the agreed date and as soon as you have signed the tenancy agreement, paid your deposit and the first installment of rent. At the end of your tenancy, we will return your deposit, or if you have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, we will release your deposit from the Deposit Protection Service, deducting any money you might owe us.

3.1 Making Changes to Your Home

Because many of you stay with us for less than two years, we will not let you make any major alterations or improvements to your home. We will usually be happy for you to make minor changes, like fixing a mirror to the wall, putting up shelves or installing door chains, but you will need our permission first. Please contact the office to discuss your plans before you start any work of this sort.

3.2 The Furniture in Your Flat

Most of our accommodation is provided with furniture. When you first move in we will give you an inventory, listing every item in your home. This should tally with schedule two of your tenancy agreement, which lists the furniture in your flat. Please double check that everything is there and in a good condition, then return a signed copy of the inventory to the office within one week, together with a note of anything that is missing or defective. Your flat will be furnished with most items of furniture but not crockery, cutlery or bed linen. The use of our furniture, where it is provided, is not free: a small charge is added to your rent. When you move out we will go through the flat to check that everything listed on the inventory is there. You may be charged for any losses or damage, which you did not report when you moved in. Unfortunately we do not have room to store your furniture.

3.3 Security

All blocks on Ducane Road, have a door entry phone so that you can speak to anyone who rings your doorbell. Please make sure that only genuine visitors can get into the building. There is a security lock on the main front door and a further lock on the door of each flat or room. Please make sure that all doors are securely locked when you go out. If you lose your keys and are locked out within 'out of office' hours, you will need to contact a locksmith and pay for a new lock. We have special lights installed at the rear of all blocks and parking areas on Ducane Road to detect any intruders. All ground floor properties on Ducane Road have burglar alarms fitted.

3.4 Common Room

There is a common room in the basement of Vellacott House. Any tenant can make use of this facility by contacting the office to book the room. There is no charge for this service, however there is a returnable deposit payable of £50.00, to cover any damage or cleaning required.

3.5 Community Room/Hall

We have secured the use of a large Community Hall, with catering facilities included, for our tenants to use. It is located at Brickfield Hall in Wood Lane, which is at the end of Ducane Road and around 7mins walk from our properties. For a very small hourly rate (currently £6.00 per hour) any of our tenants can make use of this facility by booking direct with Imperial College Grad Pad. We have lodged a deposit with them on our tenants' behalf. Details of how to book this facility are available at the office.

3.6 Cooking Equipment

We provide cooking facilities in all of our self-contained properties. We also provide cookers, microwave ovens, toasters and kettles for the communal kitchens in Vellacott House. Please do take care of them, leaving them in a clean condition for use by the next tenant.

3.7 Heating & Hot Water

In Vellacott House, where there are shared facilities, the cost of electricity, hot water and heating supplied to kitchens, bathrooms and tenants' rooms is included in the rent. In all other properties, any electricity you use is measured on a separate pre-pay meter, which you top up at the local shops. We are responsible for seeing that your electricity (and gas supply in Ducane House only) is connected when you move in. It costs less to use electricity at certain times. The standard (more expensive) rate applies for electricity used during the day and early evening. Between 11.00pm and 7.00am, the cheaper off-peak rate applies. In our newly built properties, there are Nibe boilers, which are designed to operate at an optimum temperature at all times. Your Tenant Folder has a note explaining how to use your heating system and you are given a brief induction by staff upon arrival. Please ask if you would like a further demonstration or update, if you are still not sure about how to use your systems.

3.8 Telephones

All Ducane properties have a telephone socket so that you can have a telephone fitted. All tenants must pay to have a telephone line connected. If you are not sure how to go about this, there is a leaflet with basic instructions included in your sign-up pack when you move in or you can obtain one from the office. All Vellacott House rooms have wi-fi internet included in their service charge, but this does NOT include the cost of the telephone line or calls.

3.9 Washing Your Clothes

There is a launderette in the basement of O'Driscoll House on Ducane Road and you can obtain a key from the office if you wish to use it. The washers and dryers are coin operated. The launderette is run by an external contractor. We would be grateful if you would do your best to leave it clean. If you notice any equipment that is faulty or appears to be unsafe please report it to the telephone number displayed in the launderette. If you live in one of our flats or maisonettes and have your own washing machine, there are connection points where you can connect the hoses and power. Please note that we are not responsible for tenants' own appliances.

3.10 Household Rubbish

Each block on Ducane Road has communal rubbish paladin bins located at ground level. Please put your rubbish in a plastic bag, seal it and put it firmly inside the paladin bins provided. Do not leave bags of rubbish on the floor in the bin rooms, at this can attract vermin infestation. If you send someone else to get rid of rubbish, particularly if it is a child, please make sure that they know the proper procedure. We would advise that you do not send small children to dispose of your rubbish, as they are not able to reach the top of the bins and may end up throwing it on the floor. If you have large bulky rubbish, please leave it next to the paladin bin, to prevent overfilling them and making them unavailable for other tenants to use. Recycle bins are located in the bin area for Du Cane House, for all tenants to use. Please note that you can obtain orange recycle bags from the local library located at Westfield shopping Centre, or Hammersmith Library.

3.11 Parking

If you wish to park on the estate, please contact the office. You will be allocated a designated parking space, subject to availability. For a fee, we will provide you with a valid permit and a remote transmitter to operate the automatic barriers. These are expensive to replace so we will charge you a deposit, which we will refund to you when you return the transmitter to us. Completion of a Parking Permit form, Proof of ownership of the vehicle and current road tax will be required. We do restrict the number of vehicles each tenant can park to one space per tenant only. Do not give your transmitter to anyone who is not a tenant. If we find that you have done so, we will ask you to give it back and may withdraw your permit. We operate a clamping system for cars not showing current road tax and/or Ducane parking permit. We are not able to provide round the clock security for the parking areas, so any car left here is at the owner's own risk. For the tenants in our newly built flats, planning restrictions apply, which means that they cannot obtain a local authority parking permit for the public highway. They would have priority for the rental of our car park spaces for this reason.

3.12 Gardens & Play Areas

The gardens and landscaped areas are for all tenants. Please keep them tidy and make sure that your enjoyment of them does not disturb other residents and neighbours. There is a small children's playground next to Du Cane House on Ducane Road, for which you can request a key from the office. Tenants are expected to keep the play areas locked when they leave it. The play area is not to be used for ball games.

3.13 Tips For Avoiding Burglary

These steps may help to cut down the risk of burglary:

- Close all windows and lock all doors before you go out and set the burglar alarm if there is one installed
- Check that all ground floor windows, and windows near pipes and flat roofs are closed
- Never leave keys under the mat or on a string inside the letterbox, or left in your mailbox
- Do not leave notes for callers when you are out
- If you go away, it is a good idea to leave the address or phone number where you can be contacted in an emergency with neighbours, or the office.
- Ask any callers you do not know to identify themselves. Our Staff and representatives from the utility companies do carry identity cards. If you are at all suspicious about someone's identity, refuse to open your door and call the Police.
- Never leave the door to your block door wedged open
- Never open the block door to strangers or people who you are not sure about

Your home has the best level of security we can afford. If you wish to improve it further, please discuss this with us before you fit any extra equipment. If you are burgled or someone tries to break in, please tell both the police and us. We will try to make good any damage to doors or windows if you provide us with a Police Crime reference.

3.14 Insurance

Our insurance covers the structure of your building and any furniture, fixtures and fittings we have provided against risks like fire, flood or subsidence. We advise you to take out separate insurance cover to protect your own personal property against loss through fire, damage or theft. We provide information about contents insurance in your Tenant Pack. We provide information by the National Housing Federation (NHF) in regards to home contents insurance. There are also some reasonably priced packages on offer and any reputable insurance company will give you a quote.

Our Insurance policy does NOT cover the following circumstances:

- a) damage caused to your belongings by another tenant, for example if they let the bath overflow, or their washing machine leaks and it floods your flat
- b) Loss or damage to your property where it is not our fault, for example if frost causes the pipes to burst or the damage is caused by contractors who are not working for us

3.15 Pets

You are not allowed to keep any animals, reptiles or birds in your home. The only exceptions to this rule are guide dogs for blind people and hearing dogs for deaf people.

3.16 Being a Considerate Neighbour

We appreciate that people lead different lifestyles but on occasion some of the things we do may upset other people. Your tenancy agreement is very clear about the type of behaviour we will not accept. Anyone who does not keep to these terms is breaking his or her part of the tenancy agreement so could be evicted.

The best way to avoid causing any nuisance is to talk to your neighbours to agree acceptable standards of behaviour. This does not need to lead to a set of hard and fast rules but it will probably make it a lot easier to discuss ways to tackle an issue if it develops into a problem later on. Our Housing Services Manager will try to help resolve a problem but the key to a successful outcome will be co-operation between you and your neighbours.

Noise is a common problem. None of our homes are completely soundproof. We simply cannot afford to make them so. People have different views of what is noisy behaviour and, while you may think that what you are doing is reasonably quiet, your neighbours may not agree. If you need to do something that may be noisy (i.e. vacuuming or cleaning) try to do this when it is least likely to disturb others. There are also small things you can do to keep noise levels down, like being careful about where you position the TV, washing machine or sound system, keeping your voice down when you are outside the flat and being particularly quiet late at night or early in the morning. The local authority will also provide information and will intervene if you report any unreasonable noise disturbance to them.

Part 4 Your Rent & Charges

The money you pay to us each month covers the cost of:

- Rent to allow you to use your home
- Service charge to pay for services, facilities and areas outside your home
(N.B. These charges where applicable will vary, depending on the type of property you rent)
- Furniture provision, water supply and sewerage

4.1 Paying Your Rent

Over two thirds of our tenants pay by Direct Debit, which is usually set up at the start of your tenancy. If you are unable to call into the office, you can post a cheque through our letterbox. Please write your address on the back so that we know which flat the rent is for. You can also pay with your debit or credit card in person or over the telephone. For all payments received, we will give you a receipt showing the balance on your account including that payment. Please check that you agree with this balance and let us know if you think it is wrong. You should keep the receipts safely in your tenant's folder because they are your only proof of payment. A full list of methods of payment is obtainable from the office.

4.2 How We Set Your Rent

The rent you pay depends on how much we need to manage and maintain the property. Out of that, we have to put aside a reasonable amount to pay for any future repairs which may be needed and for regular interior decorating. A small part of your rent goes towards upkeep of floor coverings and furniture and because we need to borrow money to pay for building our homes in the first place, the rent includes a sum that will help us pay back these loans. Many of you are getting by on low incomes so it is our policy to keep our rents as low as possible, but not so low that we cannot cover these costs. Any increases have to keep within the guidelines set by the Government Regulator; The Homes and Community Agency (formerly the Tenant Services Authority). If you think your rent is too high you may wish to take this up with the Independent Rent Assessment Committee. You can only do this in the first six months of your tenancy. If the Committee considers your case an eligible one, it will compare your rent with what private landlords charge in this area. But we would advise you that our rents are a lot lower than private landlords' rents. We will accept cash payments occasionally.

4.3 Electricity & Gas Charges

Ducane Road properties & Vellacott House

Only Vellacott house tenants have their electricity costs included within their rent and service charges. All of our other properties tenants pay their own electricity and gas (Ducane House only) by pre-pay top up meter. The electricity used in the common parts is counted as part of the rent, (see charges for heating and hot water in part 3).

4.4 Setting Service Charges

The full range of services you pay for are set out in schedule one of your tenancy agreement. Generally speaking, it covers the cost of maintaining and cleaning common areas, taking care of communal facilities like the gardens, lifts, rubbish bin rooms and the laundry. Assured shorthold tenants have the right to ask for a summary of the costs we use to calculate the service charge. If you then wish to see the accounts we based our summary on, we would be happy to oblige. If you think that any one item in the service charge is unreasonable or the standard of service is not good enough, please take this up with us.

4.5 Raising the Rent & Service Charges

Assured Shorthold tenants will be given four weeks' notice before increasing your rent or service charges. In practice it is our policy to increase both charges just once a year, on the 1st of January. Only in exceptional circumstances would we put up the rent or service charge at any other time and we would still keep to the guidelines and limits laid down by the law. For non-assured tenants there are no fixed notice periods required by law and we do not have to give you four weeks notice.

4.6 Charges for Water

For tenants in our student properties, Thames Water Authority charges us to supply water to your home, so we pay the rates on your behalf. A charge is included in your monthly rent to cover these costs. Water rates generally go up once a year, in April. When the water rates rise, this part of your rent will go up immediately. We do not have to give you four weeks' notice.

For staff and post doctorate tenants, you pay your own water bills direct to Thames Water.

4.7 Furniture Charges

A separate charge is made for the provision and replacement of furniture, where it is supplied. This reflects the cost of purchasing and maintaining the furniture.

4.8 Difficulty Paying Your Rent

If you think that you may not be able to pay your rent at the time it is due please call into the office to let us know as soon as possible. We work to a very tight budget so need to keep rent arrears to an absolute minimum. That said, we would try to be sympathetic if you were having financial difficulties. We will also help in any way we can such as putting you in touch with agencies offering free financial advice, and by arranging for you to pay back any rent you owe in installments.

In some cases, you might be able to claim benefit for your housing costs (Universal Credit). This is a payment made by the Local Authority to help people on low incomes pay their rent. Unfortunately, many overseas students do not qualify for housing benefit and the rules are complicated, but it may be worth looking into. We are here to help you with this so please do contact us if you are unsure.

4.9 Rent Debt Leading To Eviction

Eviction from your home is always as a last resort. If you have substantial rent arrears and fail to pay them back when we ask, or fail to keep to an arrangement to pay off rent owed in installments, we may have no choice. In this case we would go to court to get permission to evict you. Please note that your University may withhold your degree if your accommodation charges are not cleared in full. We have close links with the Finance Departments of the colleges that we take referrals from.

Part 5 Repairs

5.1 Who's Responsibility?

We are responsible for carrying out all repairs and maintenance to your home and to any furniture or fittings that we have provided. We will do this even if the repair is needed because of damage or neglect caused by you but, in that case, would almost certainly recharge you for the cost of the repair.

We aim to complete repairs within a set time, according to the nature and urgency of the work needed:

- Emergencies Make safe within 24 hours
- Urgent repairs Within 7 working days
- Non Urgent repairs Within 28 working days
- More complex repairs These are carried out by external contractors and we would normally try to get them completed within one week

5.2 Ordering Repairs

Please report all repairs to the office as soon as possible. You can do so either by calling in person, by phone on 020 8735 4990 or emailing enquiries@ducaneha.org.uk . Please do not email individual staff members with your repair, as your message may not get actioned if staff are away. If you notice a fault or defect, even if it doesn't affect your own flat, please do tell us. Quite often relatively minor defects such as blocked or leaking guttering can turn into major problems if they are not tackled early on and of course they cost more by this stage and will cause more disruption to you and your neighbours. Please do not report repairs verbally to staff if you meet them on the estate. They will not be in a position to take all the details nor can they order the repair for you. By reporting repairs direct to the office we can keep a record, get the job moving, monitor progress and take any follow-up action that might be needed. For out of office hours emergency repairs, please refer to your New Tenant Welcome pack, given to you at the start of your tenancy. You can also report a repair on your iPhone or Android phone by downloading our app.

5.3 Complaints About Repairs

If you have asked for a repair and are not happy with the amount of time we are taking to complete it, please discuss this with our Housing Services Manager first. If, after this, you are still not satisfied, you should take up the second then, if necessary, third stages of our complaints procedure (see part 1 of this handbook).

If you have not been able to use part of your flat or a major service like electricity has been cut off because of the disrepair, you may be able to claim financial compensation. If you want to apply for compensation, state this clearly when you register your complaint. You have a right to compensation if we fail two times to carry out urgent or emergency maintenance within the timescale given in 5.1 above.

5.4 Emergency gas repairs (for Ducane House ONLY)

If a gas leak is suspected then you call Transco on **0800 111999**, who will be able to deal with any emergency gas problems you may have.

5.5 Decorations & Planned Repairs

We have a five yearly cyclical programme for regular repairs and redecorations. We aim to paint the inside of our properties before a new tenant moves in. Because most of you will move on within two years, this is usually enough to keep the decorations in good condition. We do not allow you to decorate your home yourself, because we have found that this makes it far more expensive to redecorate when you move out and it pushes up rent levels. We also carry out bulk repair programmes on a regular basis because this is cheaper than doing one-off repairs when you come in to report them.

5.6 Getting Into Your Home To Do Repairs

We keep a spare set of keys for all our properties. Before you moved in, we asked you to sign a form saying that you agree to let our staff use these keys to get into your home if we need to carry out repairs. We find that this is by far the simplest way of getting repairs done quickly. It also means that you don't have to sit around at home waiting for our contractors to turn up.

5.7 Showers

All our properties are fitted with showers. Please make sure that the water does not run on to floor areas. Always use the screen or shower curtains, to prevent water flooding the floor. If you cause flood damage to your neighbours by negligence, they may claim from you for costs.

5.8 Keeping Drains & Sinks Clear

Never put anything down drains, which might block them. Do not pour fat, oil or tea leaves down the sink and never put anything bulky down the toilet. Disposable nappies, sanitary towels and plastic bags will all cause blockages. These are difficult and expensive to clear and if you persistently block your drains, we may have to recharge you for this.

5.9 Condensation

Most of the complaints we get about damp homes turn out to be caused by condensation. Condensation happens when warm moist air or steam reaches a cold surface and deposits some of its water there. Doing washing, having hot baths or drying clothes usually causes condensation. Condensation on walls and ceilings may cause mould growth that can damage clothes, bedding and floor coverings. If you have persistent condensation and it seems to be beyond your control, please

contact our Housing Services Manager. Please note that if you put wet washing on top of radiators, it will damage them and you will be recharged for any repairs found to be attributable to this practice. All of our refurbished and new built flats have ventilation systems installed that MUST be kept on at all times. Please do not turn the system off, as damp and mould will build up and you may be recharged for putting the problem right by our staff.

5.10 Tips For Avoiding Condensation

- Paraffin and liquid gas heaters give off water while they burn so can help cause condensation. They are also a fire risk. For both reasons we have banned the use of these heaters.
- Dry clothes outside if you can. If it has to be done indoors keep a window open.
- When cooking, shut the kitchen door and use the extractor fan, if there is one fitted, so that steam can escape directly without getting into other rooms.
- When having a bath or shower, use the extractor fan. Keep the bathroom door closed and the window open so that the steam can escape outside. Always keep the shower curtain inside the bath edge.
- Make sure there is sufficient heat in your flat to avoid putting cold surfaces in the path of water vapour.
- Make sure there is some ventilation in each room. Never block up airbricks or other vents. Always leave space at the back of shelves and wardrobes and do not overfill cupboards and wardrobes. This lets air circulate around your clothes so helps prevent condensation.
- DO NOT turn off the ventilation system installed in your flat, if it is faulty, let us know.
- Note that ALL of the POD flats are fitted with an integrated ventilation system which must be kept on at all times to prevent condensation.

5.11 Satellite Dishes

We will not permit anyone put up a satellite dish or attach one to any of our blocks of flats because of the damage this would do to our building. All the blocks on Ducane Road have been wired for satellite television and there is a satellite dish on the top of the building. Information about satellite services and how much they cost is given in your tenant's folder. If you fix a satellite dish to our property, by piercing the exterior cladding, you are invalidating the insurance on the building and this will cause high expenses for us, that may be recharged back to you. We strongly advise that you DO NOT FIX ANY SATELLITE DISHES TO THE BUILDING UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Part 6 Moving On

6.1 Getting Advice

In part 2 of this handbook we explained that, because of the specialist nature of Ducane, there is very little we can do to help if you want to get a tenancy with the council or another housing association. However, we can give you general advice about your housing options. If you want to apply to transfer to another Ducane property or would like general advice about moving, please ask to see our Housing Services Manager who will put your name on the transfer waiting list.

6.2 Transferring To A Larger Ducane Home

If you want to move because you need more room as you are expecting your partner or family members to join you, or you have had an additional child, are ill, or your present home is overcrowded, we may be able to offer more practical help by transferring you to a larger property. We will usually put a request like this higher up our list than we would put an application for housing from an outside person. We have a relatively small number of properties so it may take some time before we can offer you a suitable place.

6.3 Transferring To A Smaller Or Similar Ducane Home

If you want to move to a smaller place, or simply want to move to another of our homes, we will consider your application on an individual basis, taking into account priority need. Anyone we had accepted on our housing waiting list would be given first choice of any available properties. You should note that if your household reduces such that you no longer require our family or couple flat, we are entitled to move you to single accommodation, as we do not allow under-occupation of our properties.

6.4 Transfer/Internal Mutual Exchange Policy

It is a requirement that your rent account is clear, with no arrears or outstanding payments owed to us by you, or any other breach of tenancy pending, before any transfer or Mutual Exchange can be authorised. With Internal Mutual Exchanges, we would expect both tenants to make the arrangements for a move date between themselves and let us know of any maintenance repairs prior to the swap. Both tenants take responsibility for the condition of their property upon exchange.

Part 7 Safety

Important Information for all Tenants about Fire Protection

If Fire Breaks Out In Your Home:

- Leave the room where the fire is straight away, then close the door
- Tell everyone in your home and get them to leave. Close the front door of your flat behind you
- Do not stay behind to put the fire out
- Call the fire service
- Wait outside, away from the building

If You See Or Hear Of A Fire In Another Part Of The Building:

- Your building is designed to contain a fire in the flat where it starts. This means it will usually be safe for you to stay in your own flat if the fire is elsewhere.
- But you must leave immediately if smoke or heat affects your home, or if you are told to by the fire service
- If you are in any doubt, get out

To Call The Fire Service:

- Dial 999 or 112.
- When the operator answers, give your telephone number and ask for FIRE.
- When the fire service reply give the address where the fire is.
- Do not end the call until the fire service has repeated the address correctly.

Fire Safety Advice:

Protecting you and your household

The easiest way to protect your home and family from fire is with a working smoke alarm. We have installed these in all of our properties.

You can prevent fire from happening by taking a few simple steps

- Don't leave pots and pans cooking with no one in the kitchen and don't allow children to play in the kitchen alone with food cooking on the hob
- Be especially careful when cooking with deep frying oil pans (chip pan). Don't overfill these pans and NEVER throw water on a deep oil pan fire
- Make sure cigarettes are put out properly, use a proper ashtray and don't smoke in bed
- Don't overload electrical sockets
- Turn off appliances when not in use. Don't even leave them on standby- saves on electricity costs too
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach and sight of children
- Make sure candles are kept away from materials that may catch fire – like curtains. Children shouldn't be left alone with lit candles
- make sure you can easily get out of your front door in an emergency
- Close your doors at night, especially the doors to the living room and kitchen to prevent fire spreading
- Plan your escape route NOW. Be prepared and don't wait until the worst happens.

Do not leave your belongings or rubbish in the outside corridors, in the lift area or the stairs.

This could affect you and your neighbours if there was a fire. Belongings can clutter up the place and make getting out more difficult, if a lot of people are leaving at the same time, and rubbish may be flammable and make getting out more dangerous.

Keep safe and plan your escape route

The good news is that your flat is in a building that is designed to be fire-resisting, so a fire should *not spread* from one flat to another.

You do not need to leave your home if there is a fire elsewhere in the block.

You should leave if you can feel heat or can smell smoke, or if told to do so by the Fire Service (Fire Brigade).

If you are in a corridor, lift area or stairway and you notice a fire, then leave the building immediately and, if safe to do so, alert other residents in the immediate vicinity on your way out (knock on their doors).

Your stairway is designed to be safe for escape throughout the course of a fire, so always use the stairs – not the lift- to get to ground level if escaping.

Do Not Put Yourself at Risk

Do Not Return To Your Flat Until It Is Safe To Do So

7.1 Safety with Electricity

You can get more detailed advice about electrical safety from you local electricity showroom, but here are some commonsense tips

- Switch off any appliances you are not using and take the plug out of the socket. It is especially important to do this before you go to bed.
- Use good quality plugs only. They should have a sticker saying that they meet British standard 1363 or 1363A.
- Make sure plugs are wired correctly, and use the plug with the right number of amps for the appliance it goes with. You can identify wires by colour of their plastic coating:
brown/red – live wire, blue/black – neutral, green/yellow – earth
- Check each electric flex regularly, if they look damaged, i.e. you can see the wires or the coating has worn, they will need replacing. If they are too long they may not be safe.
- Never run a flex under the carpet as people walking over it could damage it.
- You cannot unplug storage heaters, immersion heaters or cookers. If they go wrong, switch them off at their mains control and call us immediately.
- Never use water to try to put out fires started by electrical faults. Water conducts electricity so using water could kill you.

7.2 Accidents in The Home

Many serious injuries and deaths in the home are caused by people falling over. The second major cause is accidental poisoning. Here are some suggestions to help cut down the risk of either:

- Do not polish the floor under carpets or rugs.
- If you have internal stairs and landings keep them well lit and clear.
- If you live in one of our larger homes and have small children, put in childproof barriers at the top of stairs and on upper floor windows.
- If any grease or oil is spilt on the floor, wipe it up promptly.
- Report any loose stair carpets to us immediately.
- Keep all medicines in a locked cabinet out of the reach of children.
- Keep all household chemicals like bleach and disinfectant out of the reach of children.
- Never store household chemicals in soft drink bottles or in any container, which might mislead someone else about the contents.
- Take any unused medicines back to the chemist

Part 8 Fair & Equal

8.1 Our Policy

We are 100% committed to treating every person we house or who applies to us for housing, fairly and equally. We apply the same principles to our staff and anyone else who applies to us for work. We have given specific commitment to treat everyone fairly, regardless of their ethnic origin, sex, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation or age.

To check that we actually uphold our policy, we keep records so that we can monitor our equal opportunities standards. If there is the smallest suspicion of unfair or biased treatment, we will carry out a thorough investigation. Where we find any evidence to support a claim, we will act promptly to put the situation right.

8.2 Complaint About Harassment Or Discrimination

If you feel that we or any of the people we employ to work in or around your home, have discriminated against you on any of the grounds listed above, please complain to us. You should follow the official procedure for complaints, which is set out in your tenant's folder.

If you feel that you have been harassed because of any of the grounds listed above, either by our staff, any other person we employ or by another tenant, please tell us immediately. We will take this extremely seriously. If, having investigated your complaint, we find that it is justified, we will take immediate action. If you have been harassed by one of our tenants, we may evict them. If an employee has harassed you, they may well lose their job.