



TENANTS HANDBOOK

G&DHA Tenants Handbook

Grayshott and District Housing Association (G&DHA) currently owns 39 properties in the village of Grayshott, with the aim of renting them at affordable levels in keeping with the aims of the original founders of the association.

In 1935 Mrs Charlotte Lyndon realised the need for decent affordable housing within the village and, after failing to persuade the Local Council to help, found backing from local supporters. This resulted in the first 12 homes, all of which are still part of the housing available today.

The Association managed these twelve properties until 1960 when Miss Pearman, a founding member gave two houses, followed by five more in the following years and provided for three newly built bungalows. In 1990 the G&DHA Committee appealed for additional funds to construct a block of four apartments on land donated by Mrs Lyndon. This was supported by fund raising from the village, loans from individuals, charities, a donation from East Hampshire District Council and as a result Pearman House was completed in 1992.

Twenty-five years later a new detached house named Lyndon was built and in 2020 three original properties on Crossways Road were demolished, making way for 14 flats.

The Community of Grayshott is hugely indebted to these two remarkable ladies, Mrs Charlotte Lyndon and Miss Pearman.

The Association is run by a Board of Trustees, made up of members of the local community and a part-time Housing Administrator who is employed as the contact for tenants and trustees. G&DHA is registered as a Community Benefit Society with charitable rules, but unlike the larger Housing Associations it is not registered with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). As it is also not a Registered Social Landlord tenants do not have a right to buy their properties, which means they remain available at affordable rents for the local community.

A register of applications is kept and updated regularly, so whenever a vacancy arises the Association can act quickly to find new tenants. Usually there are many applications for each vacancy.

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CONTACT DETAILS

Housing Administrator:	Kelly Jo Lovell
Telephone:	07891 057631
Email:	Grayshott.Housing@gmail.com
Postal Address:	P.O. Box 698 Farnham, Surrey, GU9 1NF
Website:	www.grayshotthousing.co.uk
Registered Office:	Howard Smith & Co Ltd. First Floor, Bellamy House Winton Rd, Petersfield, GU32 3HA
Board Members:	For details of the Board Members please contact the Housing Administrator
Office hours:	Monday – Thursday (Part-time)

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ADDITIONAL EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

Gas emergency	If you smell gas contact: 0800 111 999
Electricity emergency	Power cut contact: 0800 31 63 105
	Power line emergency contact: 0800 404090
South East Water	If you have low water pressure, do not have a water supply or have a serious water leak please contact: www.southeastwater.co.uk or 0333 000 0365

Please contact your usual gas, electricity, or water supplier for general enquiries. Bins, council tax and housing benefit depending on the location of your property

East Hampshire District Council		01730 266 551
Benefits, money, debt & legal	CAB East Hampshire	0300 330 9028
Reducing loneliness and isolation	Age UK	0800 055 6112
Domestic abuse	Hampshire	033 016 512
	Surrey	01483 776822
Mental well-being	Samaritans	116 123
Drug and alcohol support	Inclusion Hampshire	0300 124 0103
	Under 25s 24/7	0845 459 4905

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TENANCY AGREEMENT

The tenancy agreement which has been signed is a legal contract between yourself(selves) and G&DHA. It therefore should be kept in a safe place throughout your time as a G&DHA tenant. The document details both the obligations of your household and the responsibilities of G&DHA as your landlord.

New tenants will receive an Assured Shorthold Tenancy with a specified fixed period. After the fixed period ends the tenancy will become a rolling contract based on the tenancy period, which runs in line with when you pay your rent each month. Older tenancies may have an Assured or Secure tenancy depending on when they were issued.

If you are unsure and need clarification on any of the terms of the agreement, the Housing Administrator will be happy to discuss these with you. If you require a Tenants Handbook in another format (for example larger print) please contact the Housing Administrator.

Changes to your Tenancy

With permission from G&DHA assigning the tenancy to another person can be considered as long as the person you wish to assign to would have rights to succeed your tenancy should you die.

- A spouse or partner
- Another close family member who has lived at the property for at least 12 months

Tenancies can also be assigned when a property transfer is ordered through the courts.

Changes to your Household

Throughout your time in a G&DHA property your household composition may change. You should advise G&DHA in writing of these changes; it is critical that G&DHA hold up to date information about members within your household living in our properties. Having lodgers or sub-letting is not allowed within the terms of your tenancy agreement.

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Lodgers and Sub Letting

A lodger is somebody who is not normally part of your household, but who lives in your home, usually for payment.

Sub-letting is where a tenant let's all or part of their home to somebody else, who lives independently from the rest of the household.

Transfers

If your circumstances change and you need a larger or smaller home, as a tenant of our Housing Association we will try to meet your request as a priority when one becomes available. You can also join the Housing/Transfer Register at East Hampshire District Council; they will prioritise your application in line with their allocations policy. Details at Hampshire Home Choice www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk

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YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A TENANT

- You are responsible for paying your rent and other charges such as service charges and utility bills and you must inform G&DHA of any changes to your household
- You must maintain the condition of the property and garden. Fair wear and tear are acceptable
- You are responsible for the behaviour of every person living in or visiting your home. This responsibility covers your home and garden, any communal areas, and the neighbourhood around your home
- You and your household or visitors must not cause a nuisance, annoyance, or disturbance to any other person
- You, your household, and any visitors must not use your home or any communal areas for any illegal activities
- You or any member of your household, or visitors must not damage, deface or draw graffiti on G&DHA property; if you do you will have to pay to remove or replace it
- You or any members of your household or visitors must not place or store goods in any communal area or obstruct any shared corridors, staircases, porchways
- You must not keep any bottled gas, paraffin, petrol or other dangerous material in your home or the communal areas
- You must not run a business from your home without prior permission from G&DHA
- You must allow our Board Members, Housing Administrator and any G&DHA appointed tradespersons to enter or inspect your home, or to carry out repairs or maintenance tasks
- You, a household member or a relative, must give one months' notice to end the tenancy

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PERMISSIONS

You are required to seek permission from G&DHA in the following circumstances:

Home improvements

You must request permission before starting any works within your home or garden. Any request will be discussed by the Board Members and formal plans may be needed. Alterations to kitchens, bathrooms, flooring will all need permission. No alterations are to be made to the structure of the building. Non-essential improvements you wish to make can proceed once permission is agreed at your own expense.

Gardens

If you wish to put up a shed, greenhouse, fencing or any structure within your garden permission is required from the Board Members; please contact the Housing Administrator. Information about any structures will be discussed with you and will be at your own expense.

Pets

Pets are only allowed with prior permission. If you wish to have a pet in your home you must first apply and seek permission from the Board Members, please contact the Housing Administrator to discuss. We will consider any reasonable request which will depend on the type of property you live in and the size of any garden. We will also consider any other pets within the property or neighbouring properties. If agreed, you are responsible for your pet, any nuisance caused may lead to the withdrawal of the agreement. In the event that you are no longer able to care for your pet we will expect you to make arrangement for the pet to be looked after by a nominated person or society of your choice. Concern for any animal at the property will be passed on to the relevant organisations.

No Pets are allowed at Bidston, Penton or Western Lodges

Running a business

We will consider requests to run a business from the property. The nature of the business and hours of work will be taken into consideration to assess impact to neighbouring properties. Businesses where clients would need to attend the address (such as counselling or beauty therapy) will not be given permission.

Any works carried out within the house or garden without permission could affect your tenancy and will need to be removed at your expense when your tenancy ends.

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REPAIRS and MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

G&DHA takes responsibility for the structure and fabric of your property, but not for internal decoration or upkeep of the internal property or garden space.

Landlord Responsibilities

G&DHA is responsible for all external walls, doors and windows, external roofs, drains (where a blockage is not caused through negligence or misuse), water and central heating systems and fencing. In flats, all operating systems such as the communal TV aerial, communal lighting, door entry phones and fire safety systems, as well as gutter cleaning, internal and external communal space cleaning. Communal garden spaces will be maintained, involving the cutting of hedges and lawns as appropriate, but not 'gardened'.

Tenants' Responsibilities

As a tenant you are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the interior of your property and to report any problems to G&DHA. You have responsibility for the following:

Internal

- To keep your property clean and in good decorative order; including the repair of minor cracks and holes in walls and ceilings
- To replace bath and basin plugs, toilet seats, light bulbs, electrical fuses, smoke alarm and carbon monoxide sensor batteries
- Storage – you cannot use non-habitable spaces such as lofts to store items. These need to be kept clear for inspection
- To take positive action to prevent and control condensation by ensuring adequate ventilation. Excess condensation can cause problems with damp and mould
- To take action to prevent waste pipes and drains becoming blocked and prevent pipes from freezing or bursting
- To clear blocked sinks, drains or toilets caused by negligence or misuse
- To repair and maintain any waste/supply pipes and vents for dishwashers, washing machines, and tumble dryers

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External

- To maintain personal/private gardens to a tidy and respectable standard
- To maintain trees in your private garden that may overhang onto neighbouring properties or land
- Rubbish is not to be stored in your garden or allowed to build up; it creates an eye sore to neighbours and can encourage vermin
- To maintain washing lines, rotary driers, garden sheds, trellises, store cupboards
- To remove any oil spills on your concrete or tarmac surfaces

General

- To repair and maintain any new fixtures that you have installed
- To replace broken panes of internal glass and to replace external glass where damage has been caused by misuse
- To prevent and control infestations including rats, mice, wasp nests and other common household pests
- To repair any damage due to negligence or misuse by anyone who lives in or visits your property

G&DHA will inspect all properties annually.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

G&DHA proactively encourages the use of sustainable, environmentally conscious products, services and practices. We would like tenants to also consider the environmental impact of their everyday actions including:

- Home and garden water usage
- Electricity and gas usage
- Recycling practices
- Generally reducing the use of plastics and single use items
- Walking where possible for short journeys

If everyone made one small environmental change it would have a big impact for the future.

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MAINTAINING YOUR TENANCY

Should you need any help to understand your responsibilities as a tenant or support with your tenancy where friends or family are unable to help, there are organisations you can contact. Please see the list of contacts at the front of this handbook or contact the Housing Administrator for further advice.

Organisations can help with:

- Applying for benefits to increase your income
- Setting up utility providers and settling into your new home
- Dealing with debt and financial issues
- Tackling anti-social behaviour
- Reducing loneliness and isolation
- Domestic abuse
- Mental well-being
- Drug, alcohol, and addiction support

INSURANCE

G&DHA take responsibility for buildings insurance on the structure of your property, but not for any of the contents. You will need to take out your own insurance for any personal possessions both indoors and outdoors. Insurance *is* not expensive when you compare it to the cost of replacing your household contents.

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SAFETY CHECKS

Gas Inspections: G&DHA is legally responsible for annual gas checks. These inspections are for your own safety, you must allow access to comply with your tenancy agreement. You will be provided with a copy of this inspection.

Electrical Safety Inspections:

G&DHA is legally required to have electrical installations inspected in their properties at least every 5 years. You will be provided with a copy of this inspection.

Fire Systems Checks: Where applicable, annual maintenance check

Chimney Sweeping: Where applicable it is the responsibility of the Association to ensure your chimney is swept annually

Door Entry System: Where applicable, annual maintenance check

Communal Lighting Where applicable, annual maintenance check

G&DHA keep the certificates issued with the above checks.

KEYS

A set of keys relating to your property is kept in a secure location and these are to ensure that G&DHA as your landlord, can gain access in case of an emergency. You will be notified if this is necessary and they will not be used to invade your privacy.

Should you lose your keys it is your responsibility to notify the Housing Administrator, have the locks changed and provide the Housing Administrator with a spare set of keys. This also applies to garage and shed keys.

UTILITY AND PHONE BILLS

As a tenant it is your responsibility to pay your own Council tax and all utility bills, e.g. water, gas, electricity, and any associated phone bills. If you are a new tenant, please ensure you advise the local council for council tax purposes and the relevant utility companies of the readings and the date you moved in. The Housing Administrator can provide you with any contact details.

Any meter usage during the vacant period prior to your tenancy starting will be covered by the Housing Association. It is important you take meter readings both when moving in and leaving a property. You are able to switch utility suppliers if you so choose and to install a 'smart meter', but please notify us of this.

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RENTS AND RENT SETTING

The rental income received is used to manage, maintain, and upgrade all our properties. You have signed and agreed to pay your rent on a monthly basis and only in exceptional circumstances in agreement with G&DHA may payment methods be changed. It is very important that you let us know immediately if you are having trouble paying your rent, it may be that you could receive housing or income benefits, dependent on your current income. To help you do this we have an arrangement with the Citizens Advice Bureau. You are entitled to an express **confidential** meeting at their office in Bordon or in your home. To set this up please call 01420 477005 explaining you are a tenant of G&DHA.

G&DHA do not tolerate any form of rent arrears, but if you are facing genuine difficulties you must talk to us and we will listen to the reasons that you have given. We will make arrangements with you to make up any missed rent payments by instalments. However, we expect you to clear any arrears as quickly as possible and if you persistently fail to pay your rent on time or if you do not keep to the agreed arrangements for paying missed payments then we will follow our procedure to recover rent arrears. Remember that if rent arrears persist and court action is taken, you could lose your home.

If rent arrears accrue, we will:

- Remind you by letter of your responsibility to pay rent
- Try to contact you to discuss your arrears, if you do not contact us first
- Notify the Board that arrears have accrued and discuss a course of action to be taken
- Either call to discuss this matter with you or send you a written warning
- Follow the Pre-Action Protocol for possession claims, serve a notice of seeking possession to warn you that legal proceedings may be taken against you
- Proceed with court action to take possession of the property

We will act according to your tenancy agreement and our Rent Arrears Policy. Therefore, if you do find that you are struggling to pay your rent, please contact the Housing Administrator as soon as possible to discuss the circumstances.

Rents for those on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy are reviewed annually by the Board Members. You will be notified in January each year of your new rent which becomes payable from 1st March. Please ensure you advise your bank to change any standing order or direct debits.

Rents controlled under the Rent Acts are reviewed and set by the Rent Officer, usually every two years, this is for Assured and Secure tenancies.

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SERVICE CHARGE

A service charge may be payable in addition to your rent payment and is a charge connected to facilities or services related to your home. G&DHA organise and pay for these facilities or services and then pass any charges onto the tenants affected via the service charge. Examples of service charges include:

Outside areas

- Upkeep of communal gardens
Keeping clean carparking areas
- Maintenance of outside lighting

Inside areas

- Keeping stairways clean
- Providing a door entry system
- Looking after fire alarm systems
- Maintaining the TV aerial system
- Gutter cleaning
- Lighting
- Decoration

General Reserve

For a new development of properties money will be retained as part of the General Reserve Funds to offset the reduction in value and replacement of some longer life items, e.g. boilers, kitchens, and bathrooms. The recovery cost will be balanced against the expected life span of the item. e.g. usually measured as 15 years for a boiler system and 5 years to renew the decoration in communal areas.

Every year when your rent is reviewed, we will produce a schedule that sets out the service charge for each property, where applicable, for the forthcoming year. We calculate the charge based on what has been spent in the previous year.

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ABSENCE FROM HOME

For all sorts of genuine reasons tenants may need to be absent from their home for longer than usual holiday periods, e.g. a stay in hospital.

We would appreciate being informed in case there is an emergency, and we need to gain admittance, for example a gas leak or repair work to be undertaken. If we have to gain admittance whilst your property is unoccupied, we will aim to seek your permission first in order to do so. Whilst you are away your rent will still need to be paid and the property kept in a good habitable condition. It is useful to leave details of key holders for your property with the Housing Administrator.

Legionnaires Disease

Legionnaires disease is a lung infection. You can get the disease if you breathe in tiny droplets of water containing bacteria that causes the infection. It is uncommon to catch it at home. However, if you are absent from your property, you should take the following precautions to eliminate any risk.

If your property has been unoccupied for a few weeks (e.g. after a holiday), flush the whole system for a minimum of two minutes. Flush the toilet, run the kitchen taps, hand basin taps, bath taps and shower.

If you are absent from your property for an extended period of time, it is important that you fully flush your water system by running the bath and hand basin taps continuously for at least five minutes. You should run both hot and cold water through your shower hose and showerhead and disinfect your showerhead.

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BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOUR

Everyone has the right to enjoy life in their own way, providing they do not disturb those living near them. A good neighbour will tolerate and understand the differences in lifestyles of others. We recognise that problems with neighbours can occur; we will do what we can to help but we do not get involved if it is a dispute between neighbours where no one is actually doing anything wrong. Disputes with neighbours are often caused by misunderstandings and may be sorted out by talking to each other and reaching a compromise. If an issue arises, as a first step, try talking to them in a tactful manner as they may not realise the effect their actions are having. If this proves unsuccessful then discuss it with the Housing Administrator who will be able to advise you on further actions you may wish to take, and what action we can or cannot take. Where possible we will work with you and your neighbour to try and reach an amicable solution.

Bonfires

Bonfire smoke can be very irritating and can cause distress to those exposed to it. Please be considerate of others and check it is allowed on your council website before lighting a bonfire and consider location, wind direction and weather conditions, items to be burnt and any fumes that may be given off and also the time of day.

Pest Control

Local authorities offer pest control services to treat pests such as rats and wasps, you may be charged for these services. The Housing Administrator can offer further advice should you need help. If the issue is within a communal area please let the Housing Administrator know, we can arrange for a pest control company to assess and give advice on any treatment needed.

Parking

Please be considerate when either you or your visitors are parking. Please only use your designated space or other suitable designated parking areas. Please do not block access routes for others or emergency vehicles.

Rubbish disposal

Bin are provided and emptied by the local authority, East Hampshire District Council. All rubbish should be placed within these bins for collection and not left in gardens or any communal areas. Any additional rubbish should be disposed of responsibly through the local authority at a local recycling centre. It is not acceptable to allow rubbish to build up or be stored within or outside your property.

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NUISANCE AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Reports of nuisance and antisocial behaviour made to the Housing Administrator will be taken seriously and discussed with the Board Members, investigated thoroughly and the appropriate action taken.

We will intervene if someone is in breach of their tenancy, including taking legal action against the most serious forms of nuisance and antisocial behaviour.

The most common examples of nuisance are excessive noise from music or appliances, shouting, dumping vehicles or rubbish, persistent noise, mess caused by dogs and obstructing communal areas.

Noise can cause problems depending on:

- How loud it is
- How long it lasts
- What time of the day or night it occurs

Enjoy the privacy of your home and gardens without causing nuisance to your neighbours. Please do not let children kick their balls against adjoining fences or walls.

Examples of Nuisance

The repairing of vehicles outside your home, use of the horn late at night, the excessive revving of engines.

Car parking can often cause disputes so please make sure you and your visitors are considerate when parking any vehicles. Bicycles left in communal entrance ways should not cause obstructions.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse includes any form of mental, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse between people in a close relationship. It may be accompanied by other behaviour such as, intimidation, degradation, humiliation, deprivation, systematic criticism, and belittling.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, please reach out and speak to someone within an organisation listed on the Additional Contacts page.

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Drugs

The use and selling of drugs can have a big impact on an individual, family and neighbourhood. G&DHA will work closely with the Police to remedy any issues that arise. If you have any concerns, please speak with the Housing Administrator who can give you details of local organisations who can help.

Vandalism & Graffiti

Anyone who damages or creates graffiti outside or within G&DHA property will be responsible for the repair. If you become aware of any damage or graffiti on G&DHA property, please contact the Housing Administrator.

Visitors

If you have visitors ensure that they do not allow their dogs to foul in our communal gardens; if accidents happen please make sure it is cleared up. Ask visitors to close any communal doors quietly and not let them bang shut disturbing other tenants in the building. Please use the door entry systems where appropriate and not knock on the ground floor flat windows to be let into the building.

We will tackle anti-social behaviour by:

- **Prevention** Actions will be taken to try and prevent the problem continuing should an issue arise
- **Intervention** We will aim to intervene and offer support and advice if preventative measures have been unsuccessful
- **Enforcement** Will be used when necessary and when other options have been unsuccessful. This can include serving a notice to leave your property if you or a member of your household or your visitors are causing antisocial behaviour

It is important to remember that what might become a nuisance to one person, may not be recognised as such to another.

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TENANT INVOLVEMENT

G&DHA is committed to involving tenants in the way we manage, maintain, and develop our homes and aim to offer a number of ways in which tenants can be involved.

Consultation Board Members will endeavour to consult tenants on all matters that may affect their properties and take into consideration tenant's views when making decisions

Survey As an Association we are interested to hear how well the decisions and actions the Board Members make actually meet your needs as a tenant and would welcome your anonymous comments in our annual survey

Inspections Board Members will conduct annual inspections on all the properties where you will have the opportunity to meet with them and discuss any concerns you may have. As a locally based housing association we want to work together with the community

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ENDING YOUR TENANCY

If you wish to end your tenancy you must give one months' notice in line with your tenancy period, please check with the Housing Administrator if you are unsure. Notification of your intention to leave and the date for vacating the property with all your belongings should be given in writing to the Housing Administrator.

We will then notify you of any rent that would be payable and your responsibilities before departure. If your date of departure cannot be met or you change your mind, please contact the Housing Administrator as soon as possible. We expect that all your belongings and any rubbish within the house and garden will be removed and the property left in a lettable condition, including any garage, shed or green house space. We will be looking for new tenants and will require the property to be left as clean and tidy as it was when you first moved in.

We will need to inspect the property and advise you of any works you will be required to do before fully vacating and handing back all the sets of keys. If it has been agreed that any garden structures such as a shed or greenhouse may be left, then any keys for these will need to be left as well.

Please do not remove or throw away the Tenants Handbook as this belongs with the property.

Death of a tenant

You should contact the Housing Administrator as soon as possible after the death of a tenant. You will be offered advice on what steps you need to take depending on the type of tenancy in place.

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COMPLAINTS

G&DHA prides itself on aiming to provide an excellent service to all our tenants, but recognises there may be times when things do go wrong. We have a robust complaints procedure in place to deal with such issues.

In the first instance please contact the Housing Administrator who can provide full details. All complaints are taken seriously and will be treated in the strictest confidence. We aim to take a positive approach with all complaints and will seek to establish where our services may be improved for the future.

DATA PROTECTION

We keep records of our tenants which includes personal and sensitive information. This is used to help G&DHA manage your tenancy including carrying out repairs to your home and recording rent payments. We will only share this information without your prior permission in exceptional circumstances for example where there are safeguarding concerns for an adult or child or the detection and prevention of crime.