

Tenant Welcome Pack



on the
backmap

About Us

Back on the Map is a charity that provides housing, social and educational services to the people of Hendon. We have a board of trustees consisting of up to 11 residents and non-residents and our goals for the future, agreed with the community, are to build;

- **A Better Place**
- **A Stronger Community**
- **An Influencing Role for Residents**

Stay in Touch

In order to get the most from us and receive good service it is vital you stay in touch. We have lots of ways you can contact us;

- Call in or write to us at Back on the Map, 50 Vilette Road, Hendon, Sunderland, SR2 8RN
- Visit our community centre that offers a wide range of services at the Carnegie Community Centre, 67 Toward Road, Sunderland SR2 8JG
- Telephone us **0191 691 4136** (during office hours for non emergency)
- Homes Office hours: **Monday - Thursday 9am-4:30pm, Friday 9am-3:30pm**
- Report emergency only repairs on **07583 915526** (evenings/weekends/outside office hours)
- Email us at homes@backonthemap.org or repairs@backonthemap.org
- Visit our facebook page www.facebook.com/BackontheMapHomes
- Tweet [@BackontheMapLtd](https://twitter.com/BackontheMapLtd)

Please take a few moments to read and familiarise yourself with the information included in this handbook which should help you manage your tenancy. The details are devised to complement the information contained in your Tenancy Agreement and help you enjoy living in one of our homes. If you have any queries regarding any matter please do not hesitate to get in touch on any of the contact details above.

Service Standards

We are committed to providing high service standards to ensure that you are happy with your home and can benefit from the community services we offer. Ask us about these and help us make Hendon *a Better Place, a Stronger Community* and give residents *an Influencing Role*.

Your Rent

Your Tenancy Agreement tells you the amount you have to pay to us in rent and when you should pay it. Under your Tenancy Agreement, your rent is due weekly in advance. This means you should pay your money on a Monday for the week ahead. We will expect you to pay it regularly each week.

It's important you pay your rent in full and on time as we use the rent we collect to:

- Repair and maintain your home
- Manage the housing services
- Repay money we have borrowed to buy and improve homes
- Maintain community provision at the Carnegie Community Corner
- Make the improvements residents want to see in the area

How to pay your rent

Before you move into your new home we will talk to you about how you are going to pay the rent. We can offer you a number of options to pay your rent including;

- **Cash, credit or debit card** - all handled securely at the Back on the Map office on 50 Vilette Road, Hendon, SR2 8RN
- **Standing Order** - If you have a bank or building society account you can go into your bank or use online banking to set up a Standing Order for you to make automated payments regularly from your account.

Help towards paying Your Rent

If you are receiving Income Support, Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance, or have a low income, you can claim benefits to help you pay your rent. You will be required to complete an online form for your claim. If you need advice about making a claim please contact us, we may be able to help or refer you to someone who can.

Please remember that it is your responsibility to make sure you provide all the information needed to assess your claim. If you are asked for more information, you should supply this immediately. You must also tell the local authority and or Job Centre Plus about any change in your circumstances immediately, as it may affect the amount of benefit you are entitled to.

If you are in receipt of Universal Credit, **you** are responsible for paying the full rent to us and making sure you receive your Local Housing Allowance from the local authority. You can request direct payments to us through your online Universal Credit account.

Make paying the rent a Priority

We have a firm but fair policy for missed rent payments (arrears). Please make paying the rent your top priority. We must collect all rental income in order to continue to provide services for all our tenants and the wider community, and will take legal action take possession of your home if necessary.

We understand sometimes there are genuine reasons for late payments and we may be able to offer support on how you can meet your responsibilities under your Tenancy Agreement.

If you continue to miss your rent payments and do not keep to an agreement to repay we will take you to court to get back the amount you owe and you could lose your home.

Having trouble paying the rent?

- Contact **Back on the Map Finance Department on 0191 514 9061** or call into the Homes Office and talk to us in person if you know you will have difficulty paying.
- **Ask for and keep to a payment Plan** - we can agree a Payment Plan with you to pay off arrears over a number of months in a way that's affordable to you. Meaning you maintain your tenancy
- **Get advice** - Our team can help you and make a referral to specialist welfare benefits and debt advice agencies, depending on your circumstances.
- **Do not ignore the problem** - You must respond to any letters we send you and be home for any visits we make. Ignoring the problem will make matters worse.
- **Deal with debt early** - Leaving it until things build up only makes it harder to sort out in the long run and puts you at risk of losing your home.

Your Home

This section explains some of the responsibilities you have as a tenant for looking after your home, what to do in an emergency, being a good neighbour and what you can expect from us. The information is not a full list and you can get more advice by talking to a member of our team.

Improvements & decoration

We expect you to keep your home in good, clean condition but you must seek permission from us if you would like to decorate it. Due to the age of our properties you must **only use vinyl matt paint**, as the walls need to breathe. If you decorate with vinyl silk, you may be **charged** for the removal. We ask that you **do not paint radiators** and if you do, you may be charged. Our policy on home improvements means that you may be able to carry out some improvement work to your home but you must let us know about any work that you want to carry out. As your landlord, we have the right to say no to your request. If you should end your tenancy and you have carried out some improvements (like installing a shower), Back on the Map cannot offer compensation for the improvements you have carried out.

Contents Insurance

Many residents believe that their furniture, belongings and decorations are automatically insured against fire, theft, vandalism or water damage. Unfortunately this is not the case; you are responsible for arranging suitable contents insurance for your home. Unexpected incidents can happen and by having insurance you will minimise the costs that you could face if things go wrong.

Pest control

You are responsible for pest control but, if you have problems with mice, insects or other pests, you should contact Repairs & Maintenance on 0191 691 4137 in the first instance.

Repairs

You are responsible for keeping the inside of your home in a good condition. Examples of the type of repairs you are responsible for include;

- Maintaining your own appliances
- Replacing lost or damaged keys and roller shutter fobs
- Maintaining TV aerials, sockets and points
- Other minor repairs such as replacing light bulbs, fitting a plug or chain to baths or sinks
- Batteries in smoke alarms

Please note:- We will charge you for any damage to your home that we have to repair, such as broken windows, if this was caused by you, members of your family or your visitors.

Reporting Repairs

We want to make sure your home remains in a good state of repair. To report a repair please phone us on **0191 691 4137**, email **repairs@backonthemap.org** or call into our office. You should tell us quickly about repairs that need doing, especially where a problem may be a danger to yourself or others.

Repair Timescales

These timescales are given only as a guide. In some circumstances work may be carried out faster or may take longer (for example arranging and carrying out roof repairs in times of adverse weather conditions). When you report a repair we will give it a priority rating. This acts as a guide on how long it may take for the repair to be completed;

Example	Emergency	Urgent	Essential Repairs	Non-essential Repairs
Fires, flooding, complete power failure				
Faulty plumbing, water leaks or faulty heating				
Repairs to windows and doors				
Laying new kitchen or bathroom flooring				

Planned Maintenance

Planned maintenance is different from day-to-day repairs. It involves planned major repairs or improvements, such as replacing the roof, installing central heating, new windows, a kitchen or a bathroom which we will undertake over the life of the property. Back on the Map is responsible for this work, and we will consult with/inform you well in advance of any planned work.

Repairs Appointments

Either our contractor or a member of our staff will contact you to arrange a convenient time to inspect the problem and/or carry out the repair. You will be given a morning or afternoon slot, so please make sure you are at home for the appointment to enable contractors to complete the work as soon as possible. If you miss the appointment, you may be charged for the cost of the call out.

Emergency Repairs

Sometimes events happen outside normal working hours. To report an emergency repair on evenings, weekends or any time outside office hours please call us on **07583 915526**.

Please only ring this number to report emergency repairs listed above, for other repairs please phone the office Monday-Friday and we will deal with it as quickly as we can.

Burst pipes

You should turn off the water at the mains stopcock and report the problem immediately to us on **07583 915526**. You will be told where the mains stopcock is at your Commencement of Tenancy but it is a good idea to make sure you know where you keep that information, just in case.

Gas appliances

By law, we have to carry out annual service of any gas appliances, pipe work and flues that we have installed in your home. A specialist gas engineer will contact you to arrange an appointment to do this. As this is important for your health and safety, you must allow our contracted gas safety engineer into your home to carry out this work. If you do not allow our gas safety engineer to carry out the inspection and any necessary repairs we have a right to enter the premises with 24 hours notice in writing. We carry out a gas safety/CP12 inspection of all of our properties before a new tenant moves in and you will be provided with a copy of the certificate on your Commencement of Tenancy.

If you smell gas turn off the gas supply but do not switch electrical appliances or lights and open all windows and doors. Report the problem to the National Grid immediately on 0800 111 999 and contact us on 0191 691 4137 at the earliest opportunity.

Electricity

If you have an electrical fault, you should turn off the supply at the mains from your fuse box. Report the problem to us immediately on **07583 915526**.

Fire safety

You can help to prevent a fire by turning off electrical appliances like televisions, washing machines and kettles before you go to bed and when you leave the house. This small action can keep you safe and save you money on your energy bills. Remember to keep matches away from children and never leave lit candles unattended. Smoke alarms can save your life by giving you an early warning of a fire so you should check them regularly to make sure they work. For more information about fire safety contact Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Sunderland East Community Fire Station on 0191 444 1220.

**If there is a fire, dial 999 immediately and ask for the fire brigade.
Get out of the building as quickly as possible closing doors behind you.**

Being A Good Neighbour

As many Hendon residents will tell you, we have a tight-knit community, which is good in many respects. However, living very close to your neighbours can sometimes cause difficulties, especially if people forget to consider others or their behaviour is unreasonable or anti-social. It is important to make a special effort to be a good neighbour and not upset or cause a nuisance to others living in your street. Getting to know your neighbours and the local community can make it easier to talk to each other if any problems arise. Please do your best to be aware of the following;

1. **Noise** - Many of our homes are terraced and noise travels easily through walls. Do try to be considerate of your neighbours and keep noise down. If you are playing music please ensure it is at a volume which cannot be heard by those outside your own home. Remember that, under your Tenancy Agreement, you are responsible for the behaviour of all those in your home at all times and you agreed that when you signed the Tenancy.
2. **Rubbish** - Put your rubbish in your wheeled bin and use your recycling bin and box correctly. Make sure you put them out only on the waste collection day and bring your bins back in as soon as possible after collection. Do not leave loose rubbish, bin bags or bulky waste in back lanes. Report fly tipping, missed bin collection, stolen bins and refuse issues to Sunderland City Council Responsive Local Services on 0191 520 5550.
3. **Children** - When children are playing in the street try to remember you were young once. Parents, please ask your children to respect your neighbours, other residents, the wider community. Respect others' property and try not to disturb them.
4. **Pets** - You must seek written consent from us to have a pet. If we have given you written permission to have a pet please make sure that you clean up after them, control any noise they may make and don't let them disturb neighbours.

Rubbish

Back on the Map Homes will provide all new tenants with a green and a blue bin at the start of their tenancy, it is then the tenants responsibility to look after their bin and will be recharged if the bin is stolen or damaged. Put your bins out on the correct day and bring back into your yard after emptied to minimise fly tipping, stolen bins and arson. Sunderland City Council provides bin collection in the Middle Hendon area to the schedule below;

- **Green Bins** - Tuesday
alternative fortnights
- **Blue & Brown** - Tuesday alternate
fortnightly

Please make sure you put all rubbish in the (GREEN) wheeled bin and leave it out for collection on the appropriate waste collection day. Where possible, you should put rubbish suitable for recycling in the (BLUE) wheeled bin for it to be collected. Sunderland City

Council can collect large bulky items of furniture or other household waste by special collection.

These Special Collections need to be arranged with the City Council, each household is entitled to no more than three collections in each financial year. The charge for this service is £20.00 for up to eight items these can include;

- Eight items to be collected at any one visit (for example a three piece suite is counted as three items; a dining table and four chairs are counted as five items)
- No more than four bags (which can easily be transferred to a sack barrow by one man) of soil, turf, bricks, rubble, tiles etc applies and is included in the overall limit of eight items.

You can contact Sunderland City Council on 0191 520 5550 to arrange a Special Collection.

Tackling Anti Social Behaviour

Anti social behaviour (ASB) is behaviour that causes, or is likely to cause alarm, distress or harassment to others. Everyone is entitled to peace and quiet in their own home, so you must show consideration to your neighbours and the public by not making a lot of noise or behaving in a way which makes life unpleasant for others.

What is Included in ASB?

- **Noise:** loud music, shouting, burglar alarms, doors slamming.
- **Verbal abuse/harassment/intimidation/threatening behaviour:** verbal, written or physical abuse.
- **Hate related incidents** - based on race, sexual orientation, gender, disability, religion or age.
- **Vandalism and damage to property:** smashed windows, graffiti. Drugs/substance misuse/drug dealing
- **Alcohol related:** nuisance from drinking on the street and communal areas.
- **Pets and animal nuisance:** uncontrolled dogs, dog fouling and unsuitable/dangerous pets.
- **Domestic violence:** threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults in a relationship together, or between family members.
- **Physical violence**
- **Litter & fly tipping**
- **Loitering:** gangs of youths hanging out, begging.
- **Other criminal behaviour:** theft, joy riding.
- **Smells/fumes/smoke:** smoking in communal areas, burning commercial waste, bonfires etc
- **Illegal and immoral use of premises:** Drug dealing, crack houses, brothels.

Back on the Map is committed to tackling ASB in partnership with Sunderland City Council and Northumbria Police, as part of our vision to create *a stronger community* and *a better*

place. Tenants must act responsibly and ensure their children and visitors do not cause a nuisance. Back on the Map takes a zero-tolerance approach to this problem and will work with Sunderland City Council and the Police to solve complaints. You should remember that your Tenancy Agreement states that you will not behave in an anti-social manner and that this would constitute a breach of your Tenancy Agreement. If necessary, we will take court action, which could lead to eviction.

If you feel you are a victim of Harassment or Anti Social Behaviour we would urge you to report this to a member of staff on **0191 691 4136**. You can also report incidence to Sunderland City Council's Neighbourhood Helpline on **0191 520 5550**. The helpline is open 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and all calls will be treated in the strictest confidence. When you make a report you will be given a personal reference number and issued with diary sheets in order to record future incidents of ASB. From this point on you will work directly with an ASB Officer to record and resolve the issues.

- **Accountability and leadership** – allocating sufficient resources and working strategically to tackle and prevent ASB.
- **Involving residents** - giving residents opportunities to raise concerns about ASB and empowering them to take action themselves, where appropriate.
- **Prevention and early intervention** - preventing ASB and responding to problems quickly.
- **Enforcement** - protecting communities through swift enforcement using the full range of legal tools available.
- **Supporting victims and witnesses** - providing and arranging support for residents affected by ASB in partnership with other agencies.
- **Promoting positive behaviour** – arranging support for residents causing ASB to help them address their behaviour

Making a Complaint

If you are not happy with the service you receive, your first point of contact is a member of the Back on the Map housing team. We will do our best to resolve the matter, but if you are not satisfied and would like to make a complaint you can do so by;

- Speaking to a member of staff on **0191 691 4136**
- Visiting a senior member of staff
- Writing to us at Back on the Map, 50 Vilette Road, Hendon, SR2 8RN
- emailing us at **enquiries@backonthemap.org**

If you are still not happy with the response, you can talk to the CEO at the above address, ring 0191 514 9060 directly or email **jmckevitt@backonthemap.org**. We have a formal Complaints Policy and a copy of this can be provided at any time.

Your Responsibilities

MOVING IN:

Utilities

You are responsible for getting your gas, electricity and water supplies connected, and paying your bills from the date you move in. Gas and electricity supplies are usually connected already. If they are not, you will have to contact the suppliers as soon as possible to arrange connection ready for when you move in. If your water supply is not turned on, you will need to find the stopcock and turn it on. Ask us if you need advice about this.

Council Tax

You are responsible for paying Council Tax. Sunderland City Council will need to know that you have moved in to arrange your Council Tax payments. You should contact them to let them know when you move in on 0191 520 5551.

Local Housing Allowance

You are responsible for making a claim to receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. If you need help or support with this, ring out Community Team on **0191 514 7844**.

House Alarms

You are responsible for the use of the house alarm provided by Back on the Map for the duration of your tenancy. You should use the house alarm every time you leave the property, if you do not use the alarm, you could be responsible for any damage to the property and any stolen goods.

Pets

You must seek permission from a senior manager if you wish to keep pets. You are responsible for your pets in the property and must ensure yards are clean and no damage to the property is caused.

MOVING OUT:

When you end your tenancy with us, we will need you to:

1. Give us at least **four weeks'** notice in writing, confirming that you will be ending your tenancy.
2. Remember that all tenancies must end on a Monday.
3. Pay your rent until your tenancy ends and pay any other money you owe us.
4. Leave your home and garden or yard in a clean and tidy condition, remove all your furniture, domestic appliances and rubbish. We will charge you for the cost of work/removals/disposal if we have to put things right.
5. Return all keys to our office by 12 noon on the day on which the tenancy ends. If you don't return your keys in time, we will charge you an additional week's rent and the cost of changing the locks.
6. Tell us your new address.