

Members Handbook



ALAMO
HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

UNIT 8 ARCHWAY BUSINESS CENTRE
19-23 WEDMORE STREET LONDON N19 4RU

TEL 020 7272 3391 FAX 020 7281 5559

REGISTERED UNDER THE CO-OPERATIVES AND COMMUNITY BENEFIT SOCIETIES ACT 2014 (REGISTRATION NUMBER 27565R)

Alamo

Housing Co-operative

Welcome to Alamo

Welcome to Alamo Housing Co-operative. We have produced this handbook to explain your rights and responsibilities as a member of our co-operative. It also contains advice on your new home and information about the services we provide. We hope you will find it useful and suggest that you keep your copy in a safe place so you can find it again when you need it. You will also find a copy of the handbook on our website so you can also view it online.

Alamo Housing Co-operative manages homes on behalf of several housing associations. Your tenancy will be with a housing association, and the housing association will be your landlord, but as the managing agent, Alamo is responsible for collecting the rent and maintaining your home. We aim to provide services to a high standard and to offer value for money.

This handbook is intended to be read together with our policy booklet, which can also be found as individual leaflets on our website. If you need to refer to one of our policies for more detailed information about a particular topic, the handbook will direct you to the relevant policy. If you can't find what you are looking for in the handbook or the policy booklet, you can always visit the office or contact us by telephone or email.

We hope you will be very happy in your new home.

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1 Being a member of a Housing Co-operative

The principles of the co-operative sector date back to the 19th century. The International Co-operative Alliance considers a co-operative to be an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Tenant controlled housing offers affordable housing with low management costs. It can also generate significant non-quantifiable benefits such as increased tenant satisfaction and greater opportunities for involvement in neighbourhood management.

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice. Alamo Housing Co-operatives is committed to upholding the Co-operative Principles of:

- Voluntary and Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Member Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Training and Information
- Co-operation among Co-operatives
- Concern for Community.

A full explanation of the seven co-operatives principles can be found in our *Code of Conduct*. The code also sets out the standards of behaviour we expect of our members.

Alamo offers both long-term housing and short-life housing. Most of our members have assured tenancies, which gives them the right to stay in their home as long as they abide by the conditions of tenancy. However we also have some short-life housing which is intended to be temporary, although we will always do our best to help members find new homes when a short-life project comes to an end.

2 Participation and democracy

Alamo Housing Co-operative is a tenant management co-operative. This means we manage our homes under legal agreements we have with other landlords. Every tenant of our co-operative must become a member and purchase a share. This means we are also “fully mutual”.

Our co-operative depends on the active participation of its members and we expect everyone to contribute in some way. Members can participate in many different ways, including attending meetings to make decisions and being part of our management committee or one of its sub-committees. You can find more information about how you can participate in our *Resident Involvement and Consultation Policy*.

Section 1 - About Alamo Housing Co-operative

The management committee is elected once a year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The committee is responsible for the governance of the co-operative. It reports to the entire membership at Ordinary General Meetings (OGMs). Every member has the right to stand for election.

The management committee may delegate certain tasks to sub-committees. These committees will usually take responsibility for specific areas of work such as maintenance or finance.

3 Equality and diversity

Alamo Housing Co-operative is committed to upholding the first co-operative principle which states that membership should be open to all “without artificial restriction or any social, political, racial or religious discrimination”.

Our Code of Conduct requires that our members adhere to the Equality and Diversity Policy when at meetings or otherwise acting on behalf of the co-operative. We will not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation of our members, employees or contractors for any reason. Harassment committed by a member will be treated as a serious breach of the conditions of tenancy and may result in that member losing their home.

Equality means ensuring that individuals and groups are treated fairly and equally and due regard is paid to people's specific characteristics when we provide services or employ people. The Equality Act 2010 sets out a number of “protected characteristics”, and grants people with these characteristics statutory protection from discrimination. These characteristics are:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Sex, gender, sexual orientation and gender reassignment;
- Marital / civil partnership status;
- Race, ethnic origin, religion and belief.

Alamo Housing Co-operative will promote equality by preventing discrimination and by respecting diversity. We will recognise, value and take account of our members' diverse backgrounds, and respect their knowledge, skills, and experiences. You can find out more in our Equality and Diversity Policy.

4 Complaints

If you are dissatisfied with any of the housing management or maintenance services which Alamo Housing Co-operative provides on behalf of your landlord you can make use of our complaints procedure.

The complaints procedure is explained in the *Complaints Policy*, which can be found in the *Policy Booklet*.

Before making a formal complaint we ask that you make reasonable efforts to resolve the problem with a member of staff.

5 Contact us

Office appointments

Our office hours are 9.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

However we would ask members to note that because we only have a small staff team who spend part of each day visiting members in their homes, the office is not open all day every day. If you would like to drop in to the office to see a member of staff, please call ahead or make an appointment.

Address: Unit 8 Archway Business Centre,
19-23 Wedmore Street, London N19 4RU

Email

You can email us if you have any queries about your membership or your tenancy.

Email: paul.dempsey@alamoco-op.org

Office telephone

Our telephone hours for housing management enquiries are 9:30am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday. Your call will be diverted to a mobile number if all the staff are out of the office.

Please be aware that due to the small size of the staff team, there may be times when you will be asked to leave a message. We will return your call as soon as possible, but if you have an emergency of any sort when our staff are not available, please follow the instructions in the *Emergencies* section below rather than leaving a voice message.

Office tel: 020 7272 3391 or 07931771737

Office fax: 020 7281 5559

If you need to order a minor repair, you should telephone our maintenance agent Elkins. Structural and major repairs should be reported directly to your landlord, who will decide what action to take. However, if you experience any ongoing maintenance problems which you feel are not being properly addressed by the landlord - or if repairs are not being satisfactorily completed by the contractor, please let our staff know straight away.

Repairs telephone lines

For day to day repairs (excluding boiler repairs) please call A&E Elkins Customer Service Centre. A&E Elkins office hours are Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm. Outside office hours your call will be diverted to an out-of-hours emergency service.

A&E Elkins: 24 hour telephone number: 07432054504

You can also log repairs through the website: www.aeelkins.co.uk

For all issues relating to boiler repair please contact your landlord. For most members this will be Network Homes

Network Homes: 24 hour telephone number: 0300 373 3000

Website

You can download copies of our policies from our website <http://www.alamoco-op.org>

1 Making your new home your own

Before you move into your home we will carry out general repairs to make sure that it meets our minimum lettings standard. The repairs we do will largely depend on the condition of the property when the previous member moved out.

It is important that you move in to your new home quickly at the start of your tenancy. If you can't move in straight away for any reason, you must let us know without delay.

We want you to be happy and comfortable in your new home. So you can decorate it to your own taste and personalise it as you choose. All that we ask is that you don't do anything that Alamo will have to put right, either while you live there or after you move out. If you are unsure about what alterations and improvements you are entitled to make, please let us know and we can give you any advice you may need.

2 Your tenancy agreement

This section highlights the main clauses in your tenancy agreement and explains how they affect you. Although most of our members have similar agreements, you will need to check your agreement to be certain that a specific clause applies to you. If you are unsure about anything please contact us so we can confirm what your agreement says.

You will find an explanation of the most important clauses in your agreement below. Please be aware that this list is in alphabetical order for ease of reference and will not match the sequence of the corresponding clauses in your tenancy agreement. Don't forget that you can find more information on all of these topics (and more) in our *Policy Booklet*.

Antisocial behaviour, domestic violence and harassment

There are clauses in your tenancy agreement which prohibit you from causing antisocial behaviour, including domestic violence and harassment. You can find more information about antisocial behaviour in section 5.3 below and in our *Antisocial Behaviour Policy*.

Ending your tenancy

You must give a least one month's notice in writing when you wish to end your tenancy.

In certain circumstances, it may be possible for your tenancy to pass to another member of your family. Different tenancies have different rights so you need to check what your agreement says. You can find more information about ending your tenancy in section 6.2 below.

Pets and animals

If you keep a pet, we ask you to:

- 👉 always keep it under control
- 👉 not allow it to cause a nuisance or danger to any person
- 👉 not allow it to damage our property; and
- 👉 not allow it to foul any communal or public area.

Please be aware that if your pet causes a nuisance, we may ask you to rehome it.

Relationship breakdown

When a couple decide they can no longer live together, a decision has to be made about their shared home. If you and your partner are joint tenants and you can agree who should keep the tenancy, you can just let us know. We will arrange for the tenancy to be transferred if there are no breaches of your tenancy agreement.

If you cannot agree or the partner wanting to stay is not a tenant, you should contact us immediately and consult a solicitor or the Housing Advice Centre.

Rent

Under the terms of your tenancy rent is payable in advance on the Monday of each week. If it is more convenient for you to pay monthly, you are welcome to do so, but you must make sure you pay a full month in advance.

The rent you pay for your home covers:

- The cost to your landlord of buying and refurbishing the building;
- The money that Alamo spends on maintaining your home;
- Alamo's staff and other management costs.

Your rent will be reviewed by your landlord once every year. Alamo will give you at least one month's notice of any change in the amount you need to pay. If you are a secure tenant you have the right to a registered (or "fair") rent. We will apply the Rent Service for a new registered rent every two years.

In addition to your rent you pay a small service charge for services that are charged for in your rent. At present the charge covers the cost of lighting in the communal areas.

Transferring your tenancy (assignment), succession, lodgers and subletting

You are not allowed to assign your tenancy (transfer your tenancy rights to another person), without our written permission or the permission of a court. In certain cases a spouse, partner or other close family member may be entitled to succeed (inherit) to your tenancy. Not everyone is able to succeed to a tenancy. If you are uncertain as to whether a member of your household is entitled to succeed to your tenancy, please contact us and we can confirm the legal position.

If you have a spare room, you may take in a lodger, but you should let us know.

You must not sublet (rent out) the whole of your home.

Using the premises

You must live in the property as your only or main home and you must not allow any illegal activities to take place in it.

You should not run a business from your home if there is the potential for nuisance to neighbours and you must get our written permission before starting a business in your home.

Improvements

You will find information about your right to make improvements to your property in section 3.2.

Repairs and maintenance

You must make sure that you keep your home in good repair and condition. Your obligations are explained in my detail in section 3.3. This section also explains your landlord's obligation to maintain the property. Alamo discharges certain maintenance functions on behalf of the landlord.

Violence in the home

If you are the victim of violence or feel threatened by violence, please contact the police immediately. If you cannot go home, you should let us know, but you may also need to find temporary housing while a solution is found.

You can contact your local Social Services department.

3 Paying your rent

Under the terms of your tenancy rent is payable in advance on the Monday of each week. If it is more convenient for you to pay monthly, you are welcome to do so, but you must make sure you pay a full month in advance. It is very important that you pay your rent and do not fall into arrears. If you fall into significant arrears there is a risk that you could lose your home.

If for any reason you think that you will have difficulty in paying your rent, please contact us straight away to discuss the situation. For money advice you can also contact the Citizens Advice Bureau, which offers free and independent advice.

If you are on a low income you may be able to claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to cover all or part of your rent. You will need to register with Islington Council using their website to make a claim.

How to pay your rent

You can pay your rent by standing order, direct bank transfer (BACS), cheque or Girobank.

Standing orders and bank transfers should be made to the following account:

Alamo Housing Co-operative

The Co-Operative bank PLC

Account No. 50028618

Branch Sort Code 08-90-33

If you want to send us a cheque please make it payable to Alamo Housing Co-operative Ltd and write your name and address in block capitals on the back.

4 Utilities and other bills

There are quite a lot of expenses associated with running a home. We have listed the major ones below and provided details of who you will need to contact to set up an account.

You should be aware that there are several different providers of some services, and it is up to you to decide which one to use. One of the best ways to find the best provider is to use an internet comparison service.

Council Tax

You will need to open an e-account with Islington Council to access many council services. You can also visit the Customer Service Centre.

Telephone: 020 7527 2000

Office: Islington Customer Centre
222 Upper Street, London, N1 1XR

Web: <http://www.islington.gov.uk>

Gas supply

To find out the current gas supplier call the Meter Number Helpline on 0870 608 1524. You can change supplier if you want to.

Electricity supply

To find out who supplies your electricity, call 0800 028 0247 from a landline or 0333 202 2022 from a mobile. You can change supplier if you want to.

Water supply

Your water provider is Thames Water. Please call the number below when you move in to arrange to take over the account, or set up your account using the website.

Telephone: 0800 980 8800

Web: <http://www.thameswater.co.uk>

Telephone and internet

The phone line should have been disconnected before you moved in. To connect the phone line, you will need to contact British Telecom. Once you have a working BT line, you can then decide which company you want to provide your phone and internet services.

Call BT from a landline: 0800 100 400

Call BT from a mobile: 0330 1234 150

TV licence

If you have a TV (or you access the BBC on any device), you must buy a TV licence. You can call TV Licensing or buy your licence using the website:

Telephone: 0300790165 Web: www.tvlicensing.co.uk

1 Keeping your home in good condition

You have a responsibility under your tenancy agreement to keep your home in good condition. This includes:

- Keeping it clean and tidy;
- Redecorating when necessary;
- Keeping the plants in your garden under control and keeping external areas generally tidy and free from rubbish;
- Maintaining fences and hedges in good condition;
- Disposing of refuse as required by local ordinances and complying with local recycling arrangements;
- Repairing, at your own cost, any damage caused by you, your family or visitors;
- Reporting all repairs promptly
- Only making alterations with our permission.

2 Health and safety

Alamo Housing Co-operative owes a duty of care to its members, its employees, our contractors and to everyone who visits the homes and other buildings we own or manage. The co-operative is also obliged to follow health and safety legislation and regulatory requirements.

As co-op members we all have a duty to do what we can reduce the risk of accidents to ourselves and to others. There are a number of things you can do to ensure that you and other members of your household stay safe. Please note that this section is intended to provide useful tips and is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all the health and safety measures that you need to take in your home.

- Provide prompt access to the contractor appointed by your landlord to carry out the annual gas safety test;
- Test your smoke detectors regularly and replace the battery as recommended;
- Do not leave appliances, especially washing machines and dishwashers, running while you are asleep or out of the house;
- Never run cables under carpets or overload electrical sockets;
- Never store bottled gas, paraffin, petrol or any other toxic substances in your home;
- Check the pressure on your boiler (combination boilers only) at least once a month;
- Check the water system (pipes, bathrooms, toilets, kitchens, water tanks, radiators) for minor leaks at least once a year;
- Check your electrical sockets, switches, plugs and flexes for cracks and/or other wear and tear at least once a year.

You can find more information about health and safety in our *Health and Safety Policy*.

3 Repairs and maintenance

Alamo Housing Co-operative is responsible for providing the day to day maintenance service to the properties we manage on behalf of other landlords. However, in most cases, the landlord has retained responsibility for certain functions, including gas servicing, external redecoration and major repairs.

In return for providing the maintenance service, we receive allowances to cover the cost of the repairs themselves. The allowances also pay for the staff and agents we employ to manage the repairs service.

Before reporting a repair you should first check it is not a repair that you are responsible for. These repairs are listed below:

The repairs you are responsible for

You are responsible for repairing any fixture and fittings that belongs to you. There are also some minor repairs that we consider to be your responsibility. This list is not exhaustive. Please refer to the *Maintenance Policy* for more information on your repairing responsibilities.

- Unblocking drains and toilets (if you have caused the blockage);
- Replacing lost keys (we suggest that you leave a spare key with a relative or neighbour)
- Water damage caused by your appliances, particularly washing machines;
- Repairing broken windows (unless you have a crime reference number);
- Replacing toilet seats, fuses, plugs, and light bulbs (except in special cases);
- Fixing and replacing damaged internal doors and door furniture.

Day to day repairs

In order to provide the day to day maintenance service we have employed a specialist contractor, A&E Elkins Their office hours are 8:30am to 4:30pm, but you can report repairs by telephone or via the website 24 hours a day. Please note that A&E Elkins do not deal with boiler repairs of other gas related problems. Contact details for A&E Elkins can be found in section 1.5, *Contact us*.

Repairs will be categorised as either emergency, urgent or routine. Examples of the different repair priorities are shown below.

Emergency (within 24 hours)

- Serious water leak;
- Loss of gas heating or hot water if member vulnerable (landlord's policy will apply);
- Lack of security (broken lock or broken ground floor window)
- Anything that is hazardous to the member's household or to the general public
- Loss of power

Urgent (within 7 days)

- Loss of gas heating or hot water (contact the landlord)
- Minor water leak
- Failure of communal TV aerial

Routine (within 28 days)

- All other repairs (other than planned works and improvements)

Improvements

Members wishing to carry out alterations or additions to their home must first obtain written approval from the co-op. It will be considered a serious breach of the conditions of tenancy if a member carries out an alteration without first obtaining permission.

Unauthorised alterations which create a hazard, do not conform to building regulations, or are otherwise unacceptable to the landlord will be remedied by the co-operative (or by the landlord) and the member will be recharged for the cost of putting things right.

Damp, condensation and mould

The cause of most of the reports of damp we receive is condensation. Condensation occurs when moisture carried by warm air reaches a cold surface. It can cause damage to decorations, floor coverings, clothes and bedding.

Occupants of buildings with damp or mould are at increased risk of experiencing health problems such as respiratory symptoms, respiratory infections, allergic rhinitis and asthma.

If you have a problem with condensation you can limit it by producing less moisture and increasing the ventilation in your home. It helps if you can avoid drying washing indoors and open the windows as much as possible. If your windows have trickle vents, make sure they are kept open.

If you think you may have rising damp (ground floor and basement flats only) you should make sure that the soil level outside has not risen above the level of the damp-proof course and the air bricks which ventilate the basement or sub-floor are not covered by soil or vegetation.

Rechargeable repairs

If a repair is needed because you have damaged or neglected your home, we will usually expect you to put the damage right yourself. However, in exceptional circumstances, for instance because of health safety concerns, we may use our discretion to authorise the repair. If we do agree to carry out such a repair, we will expect you to pay for it, either in advance or by instalments.

Aids and adaptations

Alamo will do its best to assist members who need an aid or an adaptation to enable them to live comfortably in their home. However for some cases we may need to secure grant funding from Islington Council. If you think you would benefit from a particular aid or adaptation, please contact a member of our staff.

Frost damage

Cold spells in winter can cause problems such as burst or frozen pipes. This is very unusual in inner London, but you may still experience problems if you go away. There are two precautions you can take to avoid any problems:

- Heat your home while you are away (try to maintain a minimum temperature of at least 10 degrees).
- If you are going away for a longer period in winter it may be advisable to drain the system. We suggest you contact our office to discuss whether this is necessary.

4 Emergencies

Gas leak

If you smell gas or think you have a gas leak, contact Transco immediately on 0800 111 999 (in the phone book under Gas) and take their advice.

- ⚠ Do not smoke.
- ⚠ Do not turn any light switches or electrical equipment on or off.
- ⚠ Open doors and windows.
- ⚠ Check if a gas appliance has been left on or a pilot light has blown out.
- ⚠ Turn off the gas supply at the meter.

Fire

If you discover a fire in your home call the fire brigade by dialling 999 and make sure everyone leaves the property immediately.

If you live in a building with several flats you should endeavour to alert other residents without endangering yourself, but do not delay leaving the building for any reason.

Water leaks or floods

If you have a water leak in your home, turn off the water at the main stop tap and call our repairs contractor A&E Elkins 0203 887 6864

If you are at risk of flooding, call Floodline on 0845 988 1188.

Electricity failure

If you experience an electricity failure, please first check whether there problem is due to a local power outage. If it is, Alamo cannot solve the problem. You can call the National Grid if you need to know urgently when power will be restored.

If the fault is in your property only, please do not try to repair it yourself. Instead turn the power off at the mains and call our repairs contractor A&E Elkins 0203 887 6864

5 Insurance

There are two types of household insurance policies:

Buildings insurance covers the cost of repairing damage caused to the structure of the building together with its fixtures and fittings. Your landlord has already taken out buildings insurance so you won't need to take out a policy yourself.

However you must report any incidents that may result in a claim against the buildings insurance policy to Alamo Housing Co-operative. Your landlord may be able to claim in respect of fire damage, water damage, storm damage and subsidence. Other forms of accidental or deliberate damage to the building or its fixtures and fittings may also be covered under the policy.

Home contents insurance protects you against damage or loss of your possessions. You need to arrange your own home contents insurance. It is important to make sure you have taken out enough cover for all your possessions.

A typical household contents policy will cover most of the things you own in your home. This includes the furniture, furnishings, household goods, kitchen equipment, televisions, video, computers, audio equipment, clothing, personal belongings and valuables (up to a prescribed limit).

We strongly advise that you take out a contents policy as soon as you move into your home. There are a wide range of policies available so you will find one that meets your specific needs.

1 Cleaning

If you live in a property where you share doors, stairs, gardens or any areas with other people, then it is your responsibility, along with the other members living in the other flats, to keep these areas secure, clean and tidy.

We expect all our members to be responsible and to work with their neighbours to establish acceptable standards and implement a mutually satisfactory arrangement for cleaning the halls and landings.

2 Refuse

Every flat and house should have a wheely-bin for recyclable refuse and another for non-recyclable items. Some homes may also have a separate bin for garden waste.

We expect our members to be responsible and to dispose of refuse in the appropriate manner. Rubbish left outside in black bags (eg not in a wheely bin) is likely to be strewn around by cats and foxes, so please make sure that you always put your rubbish in the appropriate bin.

We would also ask you not store any refuse bags or bulky items in the common hallways and not to leave any items in the garden for more than a short period before collection.

Recycling

Islington Council's recycling policy can be found on its website. As well as the waste that can be recycled using your ordinary recycling bin, many other types of refuse can be recycled at the council's main refuse facility at

40 Hornsey Street

Islington

London N7 8HU.

If you are unable to take large items (for instance beds, cookers and sofas) to the recycling facility yourself, you can ask Islington council to collect them by logging a request on the council's website.

3 Gardens

Members are responsible for maintaining their own gardens. If you share your garden with other members then you will be jointly responsible for keeping it in good order.

It is up to you to decide what you grow in your garden, but we would ask you to consider the impact of your gardening choices on other residents of the building and on your next-door neighbours. If your garden does cause a nuisance to others and you do not address the problem, you may consider that you are causing antisocial behaviour.

You should also avoid planting anything (usually trees) which may cause damage to the building you live in, or to neighbouring buildings.

Section 4 – Using the communal areas

We therefore ask you to bear in mind the following when deciding what to plant in your garden:

- If you have a lawn, it will need to be mown regularly;
- Certain plants, usually herbaceous perennials, are poisonous to humans and animals. We strongly suggest that you do avoid such plants, and do not plant them in a communal garden or where children may encounter them.
- Shrubs will need regular pruning to prevent them becoming overgrown. Some shrubs will need a lot more pruning than others. Please choose shrubs that will not become too large for their situation.
- Trees may grow very rapidly and become far too large for your garden. As well as shading your garden and also neighbouring gardens, you will not be able to prune a large tree yourself. Please bear in mind that Alamo Housing Co-operative will not take responsibility for pruning trees planted by members and that tree surgery is extremely expensive. If you want to plant a tree please make sure that it is suitable for the location (usually small and slow-growing) and do not plant trees near buildings.

4 Graffiti

We are committed to removing offensive and obscene graffiti within 24 hours of it being reported to us. Other graffiti will be removed within seven days. If you experience graffiti, please call our repairs agent, A&E Elkins to arrange for graffiti to be removed. Abusive graffiti which is directed at people with a protected characteristic, including racially and religiously motivated graffiti, should be reported to the police before being removed.

5 Smoking

Smoking is not permitted in the communal hallways or landings. If you smoke in your home, please do your best to ensure that smoke does not drift into the common areas where it may disturb other residents.

We would also ask you not to smoke if our staff or contractors are visiting or working in your home.

6 Parking

If you own a car or motorbike you should make sure it is roadworthy, properly taxed, licensed and insured.

Members who live in a building that has off-road parking shared with other flats may park a car, motorbike or small van. However, off-road parking areas should not be used for commercial vehicles, caravans, boats or trailers - or for the storage of untaxed vehicles.

If you park on the street it is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the local parking regulations and if necessary to obtain a resident's parking permit. Permits can be obtained from Islington Council.

1 Antisocial behaviour

Alamo expects its members, their households and visitors to behave in a responsible manner and to respect the right of other members and neighbours to peacefully enjoy their homes. We will take action against any member whose household or visitors cause nuisance or annoyance to others or act in an antisocial manner. This includes:

- Harassment of other residents;
- Domestic violence;
- Dumping rubbish;
- Playing loud music;
- Shouting, swearing, banging doors or otherwise making excessive noise;
- Criminal activity committed in the vicinity;
- Allowing pets to cause a nuisance.

If you feel that you are suffering as a result of this type of behaviour you should report it to us immediately. Although we may not be able to offer an instant solution we can investigate and offer advice. There may also be occasions that we consider it appropriate to recommend mediation, ask the perpetrator to sign an acceptable behaviour contract, or, if there is no other solution, to take out an injunction and bring possession proceedings.

You can find more about the way we tackle antisocial behaviour in our *Antisocial Behaviour Policy*.

2 Domestic violence

Every person has the right to be protected from fear and abuse. Alamo Housing Co-operative considers domestic violence to be unacceptable and will take action if it is reported to us. We define domestic violence as an actual or threatened act of harassment, assault or abuse against any person living in the same property.

If you experience domestic violence you can contact Islington Social Services. If you report domestic violence to us we will contact you within 24 hours to discuss your situation, give you advice if you need it and decide what action the co-operative is able to take. For more information about domestic violence please refer to our *Antisocial Behaviour Policy*.

3 Harassment

We recognise that harassment may take place as a result of someone's race, religion, sex, disability, sexuality or age. Harassment may also happen for other reasons.

There are a number of ways we can take action against those who carry out harassment. If you report harassment to us we will contact you within 24 hours to discuss your situation, give you advice if you need it and decide what action the co-operative is able to take. For more information about harassment please refer to our *Antisocial Behaviour Policy*.

1 Housing Options

If you want to move on from your current home you have a number of options. These options are briefly explained below. You can find out more about transfers and mutual exchanges in our *Allocations Policy*.

- Apply to Alamo for a transfer when a suitable property becomes vacant. You may have to wait a long time. Please see below for more information about transfers.
- Register with Islington Council and apply for a new home through their choice based letting scheme. You will qualify for a new home if you have a high enough priority, but you may have to wait some time.
- Find someone who wants to exchange homes with you. This must be a council or housing association tenant. Please see below for more information about mutual exchanges.
- Purchase a property on the open market. You will need a high income and a large deposit to purchase a property locally.
- Apply to buy a shared ownership property. You will need a deposit and an income of at least £40,000 per year to be considered for a shared ownership property in the north London area.
- Rent privately. Please remember that private tenants have very little security of tenure.

Transfers

Alamo Housing Co-operative aims to do its best, subject to the limited resources we have available, to assist members who need to move to more suitable accommodation. However please bear in mind that very few properties fall vacant each year and that demand is very high. If you need a larger home we suggest that you explore all your housing options and do not assume that the co-operative will be able to help.

When a property falls vacant, it will usually be made available to existing members via a circular letter. All properties will be allocated on the basis of housing need and the management committee must make, or approve, the decision to transfer a member. Please refer to our *Allocations Policy* for more information about how we prioritise members for transfer. You can also contact the office if you would like to discuss your housing situation with a member of staff.

A member will be able to apply to move to another home within the co-operative if:

- Their household is overcrowding or under-occupying their current home;
- Their home that is not suitable because of the member's health or disability (or that of another member of the household);
- A member of the household is at risk due to the threat of physical or mental violence, including harassment and domestic violence;
- There is another exceptional need that requires them to move to a different home.

Members will **not** normally be entitled to apply for a transfer if they have:

- Arrears of rent;
- Been responsible for causing significant anti-social behaviour;
- Intentionally worsened their situation to qualify for a transfer;
- Provided false information to support their application to transfer;
- damaged or neglected their current home.

However, the committee may decide to waive this rule if there are exceptional reasons - for instance if the member is vulnerable or if there is a risk to their health.

Mutual exchange

A mutual exchange is when two or more tenants living in homes owned by a co-operative, housing association or local authority, swap homes by legally assigning their tenancies to each other. This means that you pass on your tenancy to the person moving into your home and take over the tenancy for their home.

You must make sure that you have read the tenancy that you will be taking on to ensure that you fully understand the conditions you are accepting. When you have found a tenant to exchange with you should contact the office and then fill in a mutual exchange application form.

We will check your tenancy to make sure you do not owe any rent. We will also inspect your property. Both landlords will take up references and must agree that the exchange can take place before anyone can move. We may refuse an exchange if the property is too big or too small for the incoming tenant.

When the exchange has been agreed, both tenants will need to sign deeds of assignment (legal forms) to complete the exchange of tenancies.

2 Ending your tenancy

One day you may decide to leave Alamo Housing Co-operative and end your tenancy and membership. We have described the procedure for doing so below, but we suggest that when you are ready to move on, simply call the office and discuss your plans with a member of staff.

Procedure to end your tenancy

To end your tenancy you will need to:

1. Give one month's notice in writing. Please write to the office address;
2. Provide access for a property inspection before your tenancy ends. We will tell you if you need to do any repairs before you move out;
3. Repair any damage you have caused. You may be recharged for any repairs that we consider to be your responsibility;
4. Fix any holes in the walls and leave the decorations in a reasonable condition;
5. Leave the property clean and tidy and remove all your belongings and any rubbish;

6. Ensure your rent is paid up to date;
7. Arrange for the electricity, gas and water meters to be read and for your accounts to be closed;
8. Inform the local authority that you are no longer liable for Council Tax (and if relevant, entitled to Housing Benefit);
9. Return three sets of keys to the office. Please return all the keys, including the back door and the window locks. If you do not return your keys on time or some are missing we may charge you for lock replacements. We will continue to charge you rent until we receive the keys.

If your landlord decides to end your tenancy

Unless you are a shortlife tenant, it is very unlikely that your landlord will want to end your tenancy unless you have broken the terms and conditions. Your landlord (or Alamo acting on your landlord's behalf) can only end your tenancy in specific circumstances. An assured tenancy can only be ended by an order of the court.

A court may grant your landlord a possession order in the following circumstances. The Housing Act 1988 (as amended) details the grounds for which possession may be sought. The main reasons are:

- not paying your rent
- breaking the conditions of your tenancy
- causing damage to the property
- being involved in antisocial behaviour
- death of the tenant
- not living in your home.

Contact us

Alamo Housing Co-operative Ltd
Unit 8 Archway Business Centre
19-23 Wedmore Street
London N19 4RU

Housing management enquiries

Office tel: 020 7272 3391
Office fax: 020 7281 5559
Email: paul.dempsey@alamoco-op.org
Web: www.alamoco-op.org

Repair hotlines

A&E Elkins: 24 hour telephone number: 07432054504
A&E Elkins website: www.aeelkins.co.uk
Network Homes: 24 hour telephone number: 0300 3733 000

