



Welcome to your new home

Customer guide

www.homegroup.org.uk

Welcome

Welcome to Home Group. We hope you settle in quickly and can make this your home.

We have put together this information to help you feel at home. You will find out about what we have on offer so you know what to expect from us. If you need something we cannot provide, we will find someone who can help.

The information is for all of our customers receiving care and support from us. If you are living in Home Group accommodation, this guide, together with your tenancy or licence agreement will

help you understand both **your** and **our** legal responsibilities.

We are really looking forward to getting to know you better.

If you have any feedback on how we could make our services better, we would love to hear from you. You can talk to your support team, or contact us via our website at **www.homegroup.org.uk/contactus**



About Home Group

We provide high quality housing, care and support. We are committed to delivering our mission of ‘building homes, independence and aspirations’.

Our local managers and wider regional management team run our services. They are overseen by directors who run the organisation. They report to the Home Group Board. This is a group of independent people who make sure that Home Group’s directors are running the organisation well.

Two customers are voted to sit on the Board. They check that high level decision making reflects the general views of our customers.

Our values

Our colleagues are:



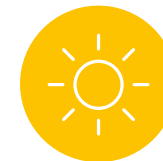
Accountable



Commercial



Caring



Energised

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Arabic إذا رغبت بأن تحصل على كامل محتويات هذه الوثيقة أو احد أجزاء هذه الوثيقة مترجماً برايل أو على هيئة صوتية أو مطبوعاً بالخط الكبير ، فيرجى الاتصال مع مركز خدمة الـ 0345 141 4663.

Chinese 您如果需要将本文件或者其中的一部分进行翻译，或者需要以盲文、声音、或者大号印刷体的形式显示，请联系我们‘顾客服务中心’，电话号码是 0345 141 4663。

Polish Jeśli chciał(a)by Pan(i) uzyskać tłumaczenie tego dokumentu lub dowolnej jego części, czy też otrzymać jego wersję alfabetem Braille’a, audio lub dużym drukiem, prosimy o kontakt z naszym Centrum Obsługi Klienta (Customer Service Centre) pod numerem tel. 0345 141 4663.

Russian Если вы хотели бы получить полный или частичный перевод этого документа, или он нужен вам шрифтом Брайля, в аудиоформате или крупным шрифтом, пожалуйста, свяжитесь с нашим Центром клиентского обслуживания по телефону 0345 141 4663.

Tamil இந்த ஆவணத்தின் எந்த ஒரு பகுதியை மட்டுமோ அல்லது முழு ஆவணத்தையோ, உங்களுக்கு மொழிபெயர்த்தோ, பிரெய்ல் எழுத்து வடிவிலோ, ஒலி வடிவிலோ அல்லது பெரிய எழுத்து பிரசுரித்தல் செய்தோ தரவேண்டுமென நினைத்தால், தயவு செய்து வாடிக்கையாளர் சேவை மையத்தை 0345 141 4663 என்ற எண்ணில் தொடர்பு கொள்ளுங்கள்.

Portuguese Se desejar que este documento ou qualquer parte do mesmo seja traduzido, ou em Braille, áudio ou letras grandes, entre em contacto com o nosso Centro de Atendimento ao Cliente através do número 0345 141 4663.

Welsh Os hoffech chi i'r ddogfen hon neu unrhyw ran ohoni gael ei chyfieithu, neu os oes arnoch ei hangen mewn braille, sain, neu brint fawr, cysylltwch â'n Canolfan Gwasanaethau i Gwsmeriaid ar 0345 141 4663.

Urdu اگر آپ اس دستاویز کا یا اس کے کسی حصے کا ترجمہ چاہتے ہیں، یا اگر یہ آپ کو بریل، چاہیے تو 0345 141 4663 پر ہمارے کسٹمر سروس سنٹر سے رابطہ کریں۔

We promise...



...to provide a safe place to live

- We'll guarantee your home meets all fire safety standards and contains a working smoke alarm
- We'll make sure gas and electric safety checks are carried out in the required timeframe – it's your responsibility to allow us access to carry out these checks
- We'll make sure your home is secure and all external doors fully meet the relevant British Standards



...to deliver a reliable repairs service

- We'll aim to attend emergency repairs in six hours and make sure any damage is made safe
- We'll aim to resolve all standard repairs in 14 days
- We'll keep you updated on the status of your repairs and maintenance work and share all relevant information



...to care about you

- We'll make our complaints process easy to access and simple to understand
- We'll make sure our colleagues have the relevant up to date skills and training
- We'll recruit caring colleagues who understand their customers' individual needs and can offer the support needed



...to help communities grow

- We'll make local investment to support communities to thrive
- We'll carry out inspections to make sure your neighbourhood or service is clean and tidy
- We'll take strong action where anti-social behaviour happens and work closely with partners to tackle incidents



...to tell you where your money goes

- We'll tell you how your rent and service charges are calculated each year
- We'll tell you how and why we make decisions on large projects and spend from head office
- We'll tell you how and why we spend money on your home and community



...to work together with customers and partners

- We'll help you contact agencies who can offer specialist advice, such as the police, charities and your council
- We'll work with partner organisations to offer you full support
- We'll work with you to receive feedback and improve our services



Rights and responsibilities

You have a right to:

- Fair and respectful treatment from all of the Home Group support team and our contractors who value and respect you as an individual
- Information, signposting or referral to other services if we are not the right people to help
- Competent, professional support based on what is important to you and will help you achieve your goals
- Support that helps you to make your own informed decisions and choices
- Support which is based on what you tell us about your needs, strengths, talents and experience
- Support that helps keep you and others safe and live with dignity, free from discrimination
- Let us know when you feel we could do things better or our service could be improved

- Support that safeguards you and others and meets our legal responsibilities
- Raise concerns, be listened to and receive feedback about any improvements we have made
- Be called by your preferred name using the pronoun(s) of your choice

You have a responsibility to:

- Treat others with respect and courtesy, and generally be a good member of the community. That includes others who use our services and your support team
- Be open and honest, and work in partnership with us, so that we can support you effectively
- To engage with the support we give as part of your care and support plan that we create with you
- Be a good neighbour and respect others confidentiality

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We recognise that people are individuals and have different needs and abilities. Our aim is to deliver an excellent service. We do this by listening to and understanding customer needs and ensuring fair access to our homes and services.

We treat people fairly and with respect. We do not ignore discrimination. We will actively support you to challenge discrimination, or challenge you to help you learn.

We train all of our support team to understand, appreciate and celebrate differences.

We want to make sure that our services reflect the diversity of the communities we work in. Please let us know if you feel that any of our policies or practices feel unfair.

We want to support you to have a strong voice. We will provide opportunities for you to be involved in a way that is meaningful for you.

Equality, diversity and inclusion is everyone's responsibility.

Please contact your support team if you would like a copy of our equality, diversity and inclusion strategy or local action plan.



Working together

Our customer board members, national customer forum and regional viewpoint meetings monitor our performance and scrutinise our services. They do this to ensure we are delivering our customer promise.

We offer a variety of ways for you to get involved including;

anyone@home: our online community where you can get involved from the comfort of your own home and share your experience of being a Home Group customer.

Recruitment: help us to find the right person for the job by supporting us to recruit new colleagues. We aim to involve customers in 100% of our recruitment.

Keep It Short and Simple group (KISS): help us by making sure our communications are clear, relevant and easy to understand.

Customer assessors: teams of customers assess services and neighbourhoods against our customer promise.

Equality and diversity: break down barriers and increase awareness of diversity issues by being part of our Life Swap sessions. Here, customers from a range of backgrounds share their personal experiences with others.

We provide support, training and assistance to anyone who would like to get involved.

Customers tell us that when they get involved they benefit in many ways. Including the chance to:

- Meet other people
- Understand other people's problems
- Learn new skills
- Feel they are making a real difference
- Learn more about Home Group and the varied and interesting work we do

We appreciate that customers give up their time to help improve our services. We have a customer expenses policy to ensure you are not out of pocket while doing so.

We listen to feedback, take notice of what you say and act on it whenever possible.

We will always let you know about changes we make as a result of your input.

Please visit www.homegroup.org.uk/getinvolved to find out more, or speak to your support worker.

Apprenticeships

We offer a number of apprenticeships covering a range of professional, technical service, administrative and support roles.

Anyone aged over 16 can apply and there is no upper age limit.

Our apprenticeship scheme is not just for young people leaving school or college. It is also for people who may be looking to re-train or start a new career.

It allows you to find a role where you can gain new skills through the latest training. We will help you to excel in your chosen field and help you reach your potential.

For more information on apprenticeships, work placements and current available roles please visit www.homegroup.org.uk/apprenticeships



Confidentiality and data protection

In order to help us deliver effective support to you as an individual, we need to collect relevant personal details from you. We comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 when dealing with personal data.

We may also share your information with other agencies involved in your support but we will ask for your consent. You have the right to change your mind at any time.

However, we have the right to share relevant information if:

- We believe there is a serious risk to you or someone else
- We are legally obliged to share the information to prevent or detect a crime
- A court orders us to release information
- To comply with the law

Under Data Protection Law you have the following rights to obtain access to, and copies of, the personal information we hold about you. For example you have the right to make a Subject Access Request (SAR) under data protection law. Should you wish to exercise this right, please speak to a member of your support team. They will contact the Data Protection Officer (DPO) or you can contact our DPO by emailing dpo@homegroup.org.uk

For more information on how we process your personal data, including on data security, data retention and lawful processing bases, please access our full privacy notice at

www.homegroup.org.uk/privacy

With three working days notice, you can see any information we hold on file about you. The only reason this would not be possible would be if:

- The information would put you or someone else at risk
- The information has been provided confidentially (for example, when it could identify a third party)



Smoking and vaping

The same no-smoking law that makes it illegal to smoke or vape inside bars and restaurants also applies to our services.

Please check with your team where you can smoke. There might be a designated smoking area, or you might be able to smoke in your room or flat. You won't be able to smoke in any shared areas such as lounges, offices or when in a vehicle with your support team.

If we visit you indoors, we ask you not to smoke or vape while we are there, and for at least an hour before we visit. We might have to rearrange your visit if this isn't the case. This applies to us too, we will not smoke or vape anywhere in your home.

Drugs and substance misuse

We do not permit you to use, produce, supply or deal drugs in our buildings, or gardens.

If we provide you with your home and we suspect that you, or your visitors, are involved in dealing or supplying drugs or prescribed medication, we will take formal action. Unless you are prepared to stop, this could result in the loss of your home.

We can support you to access specialist support services to help you begin your recovery from substance misuse. We do all we can to work with customers who are committed to making progress.

Your support team can also give you information on national and local antisocial behaviour policies and procedures.

Harassment

Harassment is behaviour meant to hurt or intimidate a particular person or group of people. That could be physically or verbally and is illegal.

If someone is harassing you, please talk to us in confidence. We will agree with you what action to take and support you through the process. You may choose not to take further action, but we would like to be aware of any issues.

If you are harassing someone, including one of your support team, you risk being evicted from your home. This applies whether we are, or are not your landlord.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

We have a zero tolerance approach to all forms of ASB. This includes harassment, bullying, hate crime, verbal abuse, threats or acts of violence towards our customers, support team or contractors. Ensuring the safety of any victim is a priority.

We take any action which threatens or results in physical or emotional harm very seriously. We will act promptly on all reports of ASB.

You can report ASB in confidence and we will support you through the process. Our ASB policy tells you about the approach we take.

Safeguarding adults and children (including protection from abuse)

We are committed to helping you keep yourself and others safe from harm. Abuse can take many forms, it can include:

- Physical, verbal, sexual and financial abuse
- Neglect
- Humiliation
- Radicalisation
- Being denied control over your own life

We will work with you using a plan to keep you and others safe from harm.

We have a legal responsibility to act in situations where 'statutorily vulnerable adults' or children are at risk. We have policies about how to safeguard and protect vulnerable people. All of our support and care teams are aware of these policies.

Please tell us in confidence as soon as you can if you are being harmed or abused, or if you think someone else is. We will take this information seriously and work with you wherever possible to resolve the situation. We will not disclose your name to others unless we have to by law, this is called whistleblowing.



Domestic abuse

The term domestic abuse refers to abuse suffered in a home environment.

It can include:

- Threat of, or physical violence
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Withholding money or access to food
- Social isolation
- Any behaviour that feels like bullying. This includes, racial, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic abuse

If you would like further information on any of these subjects please ask your support team.



Pets

If you would like to keep a pet, you must ask our permission. There may be a legal restriction related to your property. The manager will consult with all relevant people before making a decision about keeping pets in the home. You will need to have a plan to look after your pet should you not be able to for any reason.

Please contact your support team for more information.



Compliments, comments and complaints

It's easy to send us a comment or compliment. We also have a straight forward process if you want to make a complaint.

Please ask a member of your support team for a complaints leaflet which details our next steps.

You can complain anonymously, but it can be more challenging for us to investigate the details.

We are committed to providing you with a good service as outlined in our customer promise. However sometimes things do go wrong. We will work with you to improve our service to your satisfaction. Occasionally this might include offering financial compensation.

Supporting you effectively



Support planning

We will support you using a support model called LIFE (Living Independently Feeling Enabled). This works with you as an individual, building on your strengths and aspirations to help you achieve your goals. Your support team will talk you through this and you can see a visual representation of the model below.



Your support team will arrange regular meetings at a time that suits you. We will work together to develop your individual support plan.

During these meetings you can discuss and agree what you want to work on and how. Your support team will give you copies of your support plan and notes made during your meetings if you would like them.

The support we provide in our LIFE model is like scaffolding around you. We use minimum support to help you stay on your feet. This then reduces over time as your personal skills and resilience develop.

We will review your support plan with you regularly, you can request a review at any time.

We will work at your pace on the goals that are most important to you.

We will work with you at the centre, with other organisations and if you want to, your family and friends. We will provide the right support at the right time, to meet your needs and aspirations.

We will rely on you to let us know if your support is not working for you and we will review it at any time.

There is accountability both ways to let each other know if you can't attend a support session.

If there is something you are unhappy about, please let us know. You can request to speak to the manager at any time.

Moving on

We will support you to move on successfully. Where this is relevant you will have been working towards this through your support plan. It is our job to help you work out what options are available to you.

We will support you as you prepare to manage changes to your budgeting and benefits as you move. If you need ongoing support and we cannot provide it, we will signpost you to other agencies who can help.

Some of the services we provide are time limited. We will discuss options with you and anyone else you would like to be involved, to agree with you when you no longer need our support.

What to expect from your support

We are here to support you and we can help you with a number of things:

- If you receive benefits we can offer support with understanding how things work, including changes to benefits
- Budgeting
- Menu planning and understanding nutrition
- If you need to access specialist services for things like debt advice, dietary advice related to specialist health conditions, specialist counselling or therapy, we can help

We know that making decisions can be overwhelming and worrying when you have lots to think about. Legally, we can only make a decision on your behalf if you have been assessed as not being capable yourself.

If this is the case we may make a decision on your behalf in your best interests. The law has safeguards to protect your rights if someone else needs to make a decision for you.

If your support is not working for you, or you think the support we are offering isn't at the right level, talk it through with your support team. If you feel the issues are not resolved, you can then speak with their manager.



Information for customers who live in a home provided by Home Group

Tenancy and licence agreements

Tenancy and licence agreements are different types of legal documents setting out the responsibilities for each of us. You will be given a copy of your agreement. Please keep it safe.

The type of agreement you have with us depends on the type of support we provide. It also

depends on how long you will be staying with us. Please talk to your support team if there are any details in your agreement that you are unsure of.

When you sign the agreement, you accept responsibilities including paying the rent or charges. You may be able to claim Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to help pay for your rent and service charges.



We know sometimes things happen that mean you are unable to pay your rent or service charge. If this happens this becomes a debt and is called rent arrears.

If you find yourself in arrears please do talk to your support team. We are here to support you.

Home Group follow legal guidance set out by the Government to help you repay your rent arrears. This allows you to continue to live in your home. However if you do not try to address it, we would be left with no option but to take action which might result in the loss of your home. If you would like more information on Home Group's Arrears Management policy, please speak to your support team.

Your tenancy rights

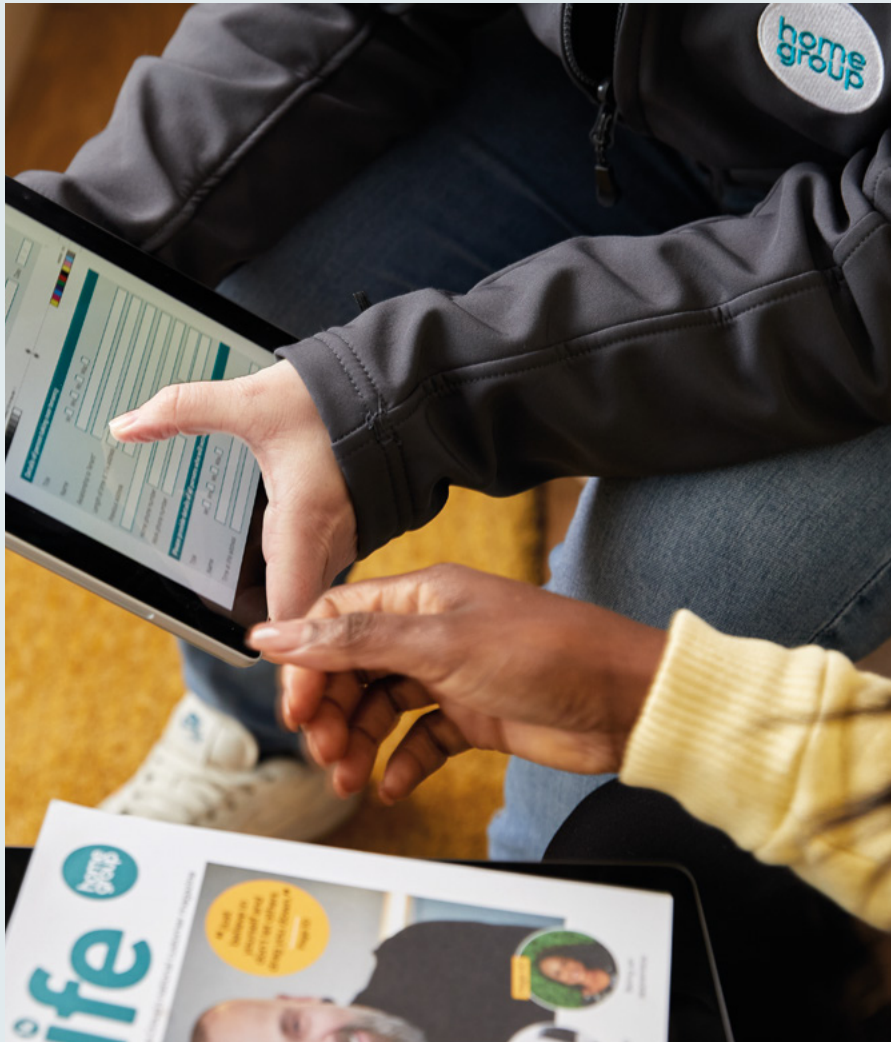
You have rights when you sign your agreement. Please talk to your support team about the details as they are different across services. These are important for you to understand and the key elements include:

- The right to live in your room or home without undue interference, as long as you follow your agreement
- The right to be consulted before we make any changes that affect your life with us. We will tell you what the change is, how it affects you and ask you what you think
- The right to have repairs completed on time

Ending your agreement

There are some situations where we have to end your tenancy or licence with us. This could happen if you break any conditions in your agreement.

We will give you notice via verbal and written warnings to support you to change the situation. In some rare cases we may serve you with an immediate notice.



Housing Benefit and Universal Credit

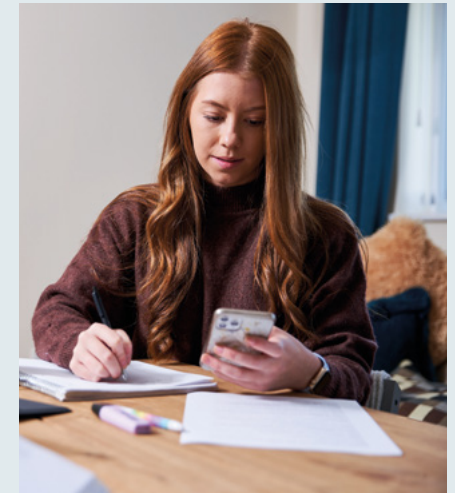
You are responsible for making a claim for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit as soon as you move into your accommodation. We will support you with this claim and ensure that you are aware of all the information that you need to provide. Your support team will help you to do this. If you are eligible, your local authority will write to tell you how much you will receive and the amount you have to pay yourself. There are some personal charges that the government will not pay for that you need to pay for.

When you make a claim we ask you to agree to have your benefit paid direct to us to help us to make sure that your payments are received regularly.

If there is any change to your circumstances, such as starting work, or a change in your benefits, you must tell your local authority about this immediately. It will affect your claim and the amount you receive. If there is any shortfall in payments, you are responsible for these.

Rent statements

We will send you a rent statement every three months. Your support team will be happy to discuss your statement with you.



Rent review

At the beginning of April each year we review your rent and service charges. We will write to you in March to let you know the new charge. We can increase your rent or service charges at any time during your first year with us. After this your rent or service charges can only be raised one year after the last increase.



Rent and charges: how much do I pay?

When you sign up for your home we will give you a detailed breakdown of weekly charges. This is for rent and other services such as heating and water rates. Your support team will explain to you the amount that you have to pay each week.

Making payments

You can pay your rent or service charges in a number of ways. Direct Debit payment is available at many of our services. Your support team can assist you to open a bank account if you do not have one. Then they can help you set up a Direct Debit.

If Direct Debit is not your preferred method or is not possible, you can pay by standing order or All Pay card payment. Other options may be available depending on your circumstances. Talk to your support team about what payment options are available to you.

It is important that you keep up to date with paying your rent and charges. If you are worried about how you can afford to pay your rent, please talk to your support team as soon as possible. We are here to help.



Repairs

Please make someone aware of anything in your room or property that needs repairing. Please see the local section of this handbook for how to report a repair.

If you are not happy with the repair, or if the repair is not completed on schedule, you have a right to complain. You can do this by using the complaints leaflet, or talking to your support team.

If we manage the property on behalf of another landlord, arrangements may be different.

Out of hours emergencies

Your support team will be able to tell you who to contact if there is an emergency and there are no members of the support team at work.

Customer transport

We do not normally provide transport for our customers. If your service provides transport, they will explain to you how this works.

Your support team will be able to provide you with information about local public transport to connect you with other places you might need to visit, such as the doctor, a local college or hospital.



National advice and contacts

Health and wellbeing help

999

Call 999 for any emergency.

T: 999

101

Call the police non-emergency number to report a crime or other concerns which do not need an emergency response.

T: 101

NHS 111

For medical concerns, call 111 to speak to a highly trained advisor 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

T: 111

National Grid Gas

Call this gas emergency line if you smell gas or are worried about gas safety.

T: 0800 111 999

Childline

Get help and advice about a wide range of issues from the website or free confidential helpline.

T: 0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

Frank

Speak in confidence about drugs on this 24 hour helpline.

T: 0300 123 6600

www.talktofrank.com

StreetLink

An England-wide phonenumber, website and mobile app which lets you alert local authorities about people sleeping rough in the area.

www.streetlink.org.uk

Men's Advice Line

For men at risk of domestic violence and for men who are worried about carrying out violence against their partners.

T: 0808 801 0327

www.mensadvice.org.uk

Mind

Offers a range of support and advice on mental health.

T: 0300 123 3393

www.mind.org.uk

Samaritans

Free, confidential support 24 hours a day, to those experiencing despair, distress or suicidal feelings.

T: 116 123

www.samaritans.org

Shelter

Free national advice helpline with trained housing providers.

T: 0808 800 4444

www.shelter.org.uk

Switchboard LGBT+ helpline

Here to help you with whatever you want to talk about.

T: 0800 0119 100

www.switchboard.lgbt

The Trussell Trust

A network of foodbanks across the UK, visit the website to find a foodbank near you.

www.trusselltrust.org

Women's Aid

Free 24 hour national domestic violence helpline.

T: 0808 2000 247

www.womensaid.org.uk

Finance and money help

Citizens Advice

Helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

entitledto

Anonymous and free online service that can help you budget and calculates what benefits you can claim.

Benefit calculator:

homegroup.entitledto.co.uk

Budgeting tool:

budget.entitledto.co.uk/homegroup

Money Advice Service

Helps you manage your money better by giving clear, unbiased money advice.

T: 0800 138 7777

www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

StepChange

Offers tailored advice and practical solutions to help manage debt.

T: 0800 138 1111

Please note Home Group does not endorse any of these organisations and provides these links for information purposes only.

Data protection help

Home Group's data protection officer

Get in touch if you have any queries about Home Group's use of your personal data.

dpo@homegroup.org.uk

www.homegroup.org.uk/privacy

Employment and training help

National Careers Service

Get free, impartial advice from the National Careers Service.

T: 0800 100 900

nationalcareers.service.gov.uk

The Prince's Trust

A youth charity that helps change young lives.

T: 0800 842 842

www.princes-trust.org.uk



Contact us

Our registered head office is:

Home Group
One Strawberry Lane
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4BX

www.homegroup.org.uk

Let's get social



@homegroup



@homegrouphousing



@home_group_

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Home and Communities Agency
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