

## Mutual Support Guidelines

One of the guiding principles of a co-housing community is that its members are willing to act as friendly and helpful neighbours to each other, to help each other out on occasions and especially in emergencies and to be generally aware and supportive of each other's needs. This is a principle adopted as policy by Hope Co-Housing CIC. Any person joining HCH needs to understand that:

- s/he must take full responsibility for themselves and their own welfare
- s/he must be capable of independent living without recourse to the group
- All resident members commit to being neighbourly and can expect reasonable support from the group.

'Helpfulness' for one person can be experienced as 'intrusiveness' by another; someone else's 'respectful distance' can be interpreted as 'lack of support'

It is important therefore that, from the beginning, members share and take responsibility for communicating a broad understanding of what they mean by 'being neighbourly' and what is to be understood by 'reasonable support'. This shared understanding will provide a basic starting point from which the group will grow its own experience as its members share a life together.

## Guidelines

A group commitment to 'mutual support' means that members undertake to provide reciprocal services and benefits in a spirit of neighbourliness. This is understood to mean one-off or short-term assistance for a range of minor contingencies, but not long-term and regular personal care that more properly should be supplied by the professional or welfare services. Its basis is entirely voluntary and cannot be required or expected as of right. 'Short term' is understood to mean no longer than six weeks.

What mutual support means in general:

- Someone needs a neighbour to watch out for a delivery
- Someone notices and investigates a neighbour's unusual absence
- The maintenance of a spirit of helpful and reciprocal caring in the group
- Watching out for the safety, security and wellbeing of fellow residents

What mutual support might mean in particular instances

- Someone is unwell and needs a prescription to be collected, eye-drops administered, shopping done or a meal provided
- Someone needs a lift to a hospital appointment or a phone call to be made to the doctor
- Someone needs plants to be watered and a pet fed while they are away from home

What mutual support would generally not mean:

- The right to expect the regular cleaning and upkeep of a member's home or the regular provision of meals
- The right to expect personal care such as dressing, showering, toileting, changing dressings or other services of a personal nature
- The right to expect shopping or other services to be carried out on a regular basis.

Services rendered must be at the request of an individual needing them or with their agreement.