

BETRA
Tenant
Management
Organisation

Residents Handbook

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Introduction

This handbook is for all new residents of the Barnstaple Estate. We have designed it to give you as much information as you need in order to settle into your new home. It will tell you about the services we offer and your responsibilities as a resident.

If you have any questions or issues regarding this information, feel free to call us on 01708 344 300.

Our estate is made up of 13 Houses all of which are three stories high. They are listed below:

- Accrington House
- Alcester House
- Amphill House
- Angmering House
- Cardigan House
- Devizes House
- Kirkham House
- Oundle House
- Radstock House
- Southsea House
- Stroud House
- Thornbury House
- Upton House

There are local schools, shops, a library, a medical practice, bus stops, a community centre, fitness centre and much more. Do not be afraid to ask us for details of these and other local amenities.

About BETRA

A community that lives well together, looks after its property, and cares for the environment: these are the values that led to the setting up of BETRA, a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) formed in April 2004. We were part of a new scheme from the Government, whose aim was to give back some power to residents on estates.

A TMO is created when residents, tenants and leaseholders, in a defined area of council or housing association homes, create a corporate body and, typically, elect a management committee to run the body. This body then enters into a formal

legal contract with the landlord of the home (In our case Havering Council), known as the management agreement.

The management agreement details precisely which services are managed by the TMO on behalf of the landlord. The extent of the devolution in service can vary enormously, particularly between small and large TMOs, but may typically include day-to-day repairs, allocations and lettings, tenancy management, cleaning and caretaking, and rent collection. The TMO's operations are mainly funded by the management fees payable by the landlord under the agreement.

The TMO can take a number of legal forms. Registered TMOs may be a co-operative, or set up under corporate law.

TMOs have a track record of delivering better resident services than councils, and that is what we aim to do here at BETRA.

In Havering there are currently three TMOs:

- BETRA TMO - Harold Hill
- PETRA TMO - Hornchurch
- DELTA TMO - Gidea Park

While all Havering's TMOs run as separate entities, we do collaborate where appropriate and within our remits.

BETRA's small, voluntary board consists of local residents, supported by the estate manager, Lloyd Edwards. A local Council representative also attends our monthly meetings. These board meetings usually take place on a Thursday at the BETRA office, with alternate times of 7pm and 4pm. Once a year we hold an annual general meeting, also at the BETRA office.

If you would like to get involved with our board please do not hesitate to contact the estate manager, who will be able to give you details of the next meeting and if there are currently any spaces on our board.

Our staff:

- We currently have five permanent members of staff:
- Lloyd Edwards - Estate Manager
- Jennie Goddard - Part Time Housing Officer
- Mark Richardson - Senior Caretaker
- Steve Richardson - Caretaker
- Naomi Cooper - Bookkeeper

Our aims and objectives

One of our main objectives is to ensure that the estate is maintained and our service provided to the highest level for the residents. The board oversees the day-to-day running of the estate, and helps come up with new ideas for improvements. Board members attend training courses to aid them with their role on the committee.

BETRA will:

- check all common areas of the estate each day, identifying any issues, and having an order of job priority
- remove any rubbish around the estate daily, inspect the communal bins daily and clean graffiti as soon as it is noticed/reported
- encourage active participation by all residents and keep you informed of any opportunities arising in the local area
- treat all residents equally and with respect, taking action if required to ensure this standard is maintained.

We hold annual surveys to keep us informed of your individual circumstances and views. Please take the time to fill these out – they help us to help you.

Keeping you informed

Any direct communication is usually done by either letter or telephone. However, we also produce and deliver a quarterly newsletter to your door, and have two notice boards on the estate, which contain local events and information.

Confidentiality

BETRA has a strict code of confidentiality. If, when reporting things to us, you wish your name and address to remain anonymous please let us know. Any information you give to us, ie telephone numbers, next of kin etc, will always remain confidential to our records. If it is necessary we will only give out information with your permission.

Equal opportunities

BETRA is an equal opportunities organisation. We will never discriminate against any resident on the grounds of religion, colour, beliefs, marital status, age, sex, sexual orientation or disability. We have a written copy of our equal opportunities policy and procedures as part of our management agreement with the Council.

Other opportunities

From time to time we hear of opportunities ranging from training courses to new places of interest opening up. Any information we receive like this goes straight into our newsletter and onto our notice boards – so do check them out.

Your new home

Welcome to the Barnstaple Estate. BETRA and its board members wish you an enjoyable and comfortable life on our estate. You will have most likely already met our estate manager, Lloyd Edwards and our housing officer Jennie Goddard, and we're sure you will see our grounds maintenance guys Mark Richardson and Steve Richardson out and about.

Your tenancy

When a new tenant signs up to take a council flat they are automatically put on an introductory tenancy. The usual period for this type of tenancy agreement is 12 months, unless they have been on the Council housing scheme prior to moving in.

This is the Council's policy and at any time during this introductory period it has the right to cancel your tenancy if you fail to adhere to the tenancy rules. After the introductory period, if there are no concerns, you will be placed on a three or five-year fixed-term tenancy, with a review of the tenancy completed towards the end of the term.

Your tenancy start date is as per your tenancy agreement and you are responsible for the rent from that date. You may not be responsible for the full rent yourself, but it is still your responsibility to make sure all the necessary payments and benefits are in place prior to this start date.

You are also responsible for the gas and electricity supplied to your flat. When you first move in, both of these will be capped. You will need to contact your preferred suppliers to uncap the supply.

Once set up, you then have a number of choices on payment method. You can have a card or a key meter where you pay or 'top-up' as you go, which can both be topped up at our local shops. Or you can go for the option of paying quarterly (ie, every three months). You should inform the respective companies of the options you prefer, and they can change the meters accordingly. Your gas meter is usually in a lower cupboard in your kitchen and the electric meter is usually in the cupboard in the hallway.

Pride in our estate

Our staff work hard to keep the estate looking its best, and keep it free from litter and broken glass. We do ask all of our residents to help out with keeping it at its best by not allowing animals to foul anywhere, without the owner clearing up after it. However, please remember: the successful care and upkeep of the estate is as much down to you as it is for us and the Council.

Post Grenfell, fire safety has rightly become a priority across public sector housing. Barbecues are not permitted on any balcony. Please ensure that all public areas are kept tidy with no rubbish or household items being left in public areas.

We also have a zero tolerance policy towards clutter left in the stairwells and on balconies. These constitute an unacceptable fire risk and must be avoided.

Please be aware that graffiti will not be tolerated anywhere on our estate and could lead to prosecution. We have CCTV around our estate, so that these kinds of offences can be caught on camera. This goes for dumping and fly-tipping – offences that can carry a hefty fine and in some cases could affect your tenancy.

It is also against the law to smoke in any inside public areas, including the lobbies in our blocks of flats. If smoking on balconies, please take care to dispose of butts responsibly ensuring they neither become litter on the ground below your balcony, nor a fire hazard.

We also ask our residents to be vigilante towards any drug taking and its paraphernalia left as litter. If there is any issues to report please take a note of the date and exact time and let us know as soon as possible. Please, do not, under any circumstances, touch anything – we will clear it up.

This is all done with the intention of making our community a nice area for all to be in, and, where appropriate, for children to play around in. With that in mind, there are no ball games allowed on the green areas due to the close proximity of other residents, cars and windows.

Community events

Sometimes BETRA will fund community events on the grassed areas or around the car park located at the rear of Oundle House. These are aimed at bringing the community together.

BETRA will let you know if there are any events coming up. If you would like to get involved or have any suggestions, please contact our office.

Tackling domestic violence

BETRA is very aware of the fears and practical problems that victims of domestic violence face. It takes bucket-loads of courage to get away, especially when there are children involved. Help is always available, and not just from ourselves – there is also:

- Victim Support (01708 451000)
- National Women’s Aid (0808 200 0247).
- and the local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), who are on hand to help in safeguarding children (01708 43322) and adults (01708 433550).

Remember: It is your duty to report any concerns you may have regarding the welfare of both adults and children.

Anti-social behaviour

BETRA will not accept any forms of anti-social behaviour around our estate. Residents are responsible for their own behaviour, and that of any visitors they may have.

If you have any questions regarding anti-social behaviour, please do not hesitate to contact our office. Likewise if you feel you are a victim of anti-social behaviour please get in contact with us straight away.

Graffiti and vandalism are not tolerated in any part of our estate. If found guilty of graffiti or vandalism then you could lose your tenancy. It is also possible that there could be charges incurred on top of your rent, due to any reparation/cleaning costs necessary.

Likewise, if you witness any vandalism/graffiti or other forms of anti-social behaviour, please report it to the police using their local telephone number: 101. Or you can report it to our office during opening hours, which are Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm.

Your responsibilities

Visitors

Any visitors to your home or the estate associated with you will be your responsibility, therefore any issue with visitors associated with you or your home could lead to your tenancy being revoked.

Parking

We have internal car parks around the estate. We class any off-street parking as internal car parks and you will notice these as you go around the estate.

You will see the signs up also notifying residents and the public alike whether or not a car requires a permit to be on display when parked there. These permits are free to all BETRA TMO residents and can be collected at any stage from our Office.

When parking on the estate, please ensure that you do not block someone else in, or block the path to get the large communal bins out to the roadside.

If parking on the roads around our estate, please ensure that you are using a marked bay (usually designated by broken white lines). Local council parking patrol officers often visit the estate, so abiding by these rules is important. Parking outside these set bays could result in a hefty fine.

Good neighbours

We ask all residents to be considerate and neighbourly, especially to elderly and/or disabled residents, who may have no-one to help them day-to-day. Residents in these circumstances can also ask BETRA for help. We appreciate that tasks can sometimes be difficult, and where we can, we will always be happy to help.

Fire Safety

Living in communal buildings you are not only responsible for your own actions but also rely on your neighbours doing the same.

Please remember that if you have a balcony you cannot have an open fire, this includes BBQs and the like. You must at all times reduce the risk of fire by not leaving cooking facilities unattended and avoid leaving the property while using machines such as washing machines, dishwashers and tumble-dryers.

Havering's zero tolerance policy regarding clutter extends to all communal areas. They have this policy for your safety. This policy means nothing should be stored in the communal lobby area, nor on any landing. The TMO and Council complete regular checks of the buildings and are within their rights to remove any items left in the communal areas. Items that can be removed include, but are not exclusive to, push chairs, prams, rubbish bags, bikes and shoe racks etc.

All of our properties have a stay put in case of fire policy in place. Should a fire break out in another flat or in the lobby areas you should be safe in your property for enough time to allow emergency services to get to you. However, if you feel a route out of the building is safe for you and your family, then please do leave the building and assemble at the nearest external car park.

Although the annual gas checks on your boilers include a fire alarm check, it is the tenant's responsibility to check the fire alarms are working in your property at all times. You can do this by pressing the button on your fire alarm and it should give off a few seconds of alarm. This tells you the device is working correctly.

If you haven't touched the device and it beeps intermittently this would suggest the battery in the device is running out. If you hear this, please seek to change the battery immediately or call our office and we will seek to fix that for you.

Disposing of rubbish

Normal household rubbish can be disposed of in our communal wheelie bins, which can be found in your nearest bin compounds. These will have been shown to you when you took the guided tour around the property.

Please note: only household rubbish is to be put in these bins and the bin compounds. Any green waste placed in these bins could result in the bin men refusing to collect the bins therefore leaving the bins full for the next week.

Your rubbish collection day is Tuesday. We have a recycling bin in each compound which is for plastics and paper. Please note: this rubbish must be put in orange bags otherwise the bin men may refuse to take it away. Orange bags can be collected free from the library in Hilldene Avenue.

No fly-tipping is allowed in or around any of the bins. If caught by ourselves, other residents or by our CCTV, you could be liable to a fine, prosecution or even losing your tenancy.

The Council has a 'street care' service that will come and collect large items for a fee. A list of the fees and the application form can be obtained from our office.

Repairs and maintenance

It is the responsibility of the tenant to report to the BETRA office any defects and repairs needed as soon as possible. It is also the responsibility of the tenant to take care of their home and not allow negligence or abuse, either by members of their family or visitors.

Every reported repair/issue is assessed individually. When reporting a repair, more often than not BETRA will come and inspect the issue raised first. If the job is to be completed by the Council we can contact them on your behalf. If we are responsible for the repair, we will aim to complete the job that day. This may not always be possible (eg, if it is a large or complicated job), but if this is the case we will arrange a follow-up appointment.

Any alterations or additions to your property or its fixtures must have written permission from BETRA or the local Council housing department.

Most minor repairs are dealt with on site, and are dealt with swiftly. However, we uphold our right not to complete a repair if we believe the damage was not caused by ordinary day-to-day use, or if we believe the issue to have been caused on purpose. Any defect that arises out of negligence or abuse, the tenant could be liable for the repair costs including labour.

Leaseholders can ask BETRA to carry out repairs, but it will be the estate manager's decision as to whether or not the TMO can complete the works. If it is possible then the leaseholder will be charged the same way a contractor would.

The service charges leaseholders incur for cleaning of the blocks, etc, are calculated and completed by Havering Council.

Havering Council is responsible for any road, pathway or manhole covers that have defects and its Housing department is responsible for any building works that are necessary, such as guttering, drains, roofs, etc. It is also responsible for door entry systems, stairwells, aerials and any major works, and any works that need to be reported and carried out on boilers.

However, if you smell gas, you must call a company called TRANSCO on 0800 111 999 straight away. They will then come out and assess if you have a gas leak or anything untoward, switching off the gas if necessary. You will then need to call Havering or BETRA, so that we can send a boiler contractor to complete any works.

How do I report a repair?

Our office is usually staffed Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm, depending on staff training or emergencies. Or you can report it on 01708 344300, Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am and 5pm.

Contacting us

Feel free to visit us at our office: 8 Angmering House, Barnstaple Road Harold Hill, Romford RM3 7SX. Or call us on: 01708 344300. Or email: betratmo@btconnect.com Or visit our website at www.betratmo.org

We have a repair priority policy, and obviously any emergencies or security issues will then jump to the head of the queue.

If needing to report repairs to Havering directly you will need to register for an online housing account on the Havering website, or call their emergency line between 5pm and 9pm Monday to Friday, and over the weekend: 01708 756699.

With a housing account, you will not only be able to report repairs, but also:

- See rent details and current position
- Council Tax current position and details
- Apply for new housing (if overcrowded, or with spare capacity, or need to move for medical reasons etc)
- Report issues around the borough
- View any repairs your property has outstanding
- Search for any other Havering services

Please make sure you know the people you allow into your flat. If you have reported an issue or repair, make sure you see some I.D before you let them in.

Our caretakers do not carry I.D on them but as they are on the estate daily hopefully you will get to know them. If in any doubt, call our office first to ensure we have sent them to your property.

Affordable home insurance

When the pennies are scarce it is understandable to miss out on things like home insurance cover. However, that can be a costly mistake – fire and smoke damage alone can cost you a lot, especially when it comes to replacing your personal belongings. Or it could be that you forgot to turn the tap off fully and it causes damage to the flat downstairs.

Havering Council has an agreement with Aviva Insurance who offer good value schemes for you and your property. If you wish to know more about these schemes visit the Havering website or have a chat with Lloyd or Jennie in the BETRA office.

Windows

Windows and frames can be liable for repairs from time to time. Havering contractors are responsible for these repairs, but feel free to contact us first as usually Havering's contact centre requires BETRA to inspect the issue on their behalf.

Many of the windows also have vents at the top. Please ensure these are open, as closing them can increase the chance of there being a build up of condensation within your flat, which can lead to dampness or even mould.

Condensation

As stated before, keeping your flat ventilated can prevent condensation, which is more likely to build up in winter periods. Other precautions to stop the build up of condensation are, 1) Do not block air bricks, and 2) Open windows and balconies when drying clothes.

Mould

Mould can be caused by a number of things. Condensation build up is one of the main reasons, as well as a water leak or even dampness of the walls coming from outside.

Mould will most likely build up if you have furniture pressed against the walls of your flat, so a top tip would be to leave an inch or so gap behind any furniture even beds to allow a circulation of air, this will dramatically reduce the risk of mould building up on your walls. If you feel there is a more serious problem with mould please do not hesitate to call us ASAP and we will arrange for one of our caretakers to come and inspect the area concerned.

Damp

Can be caused by issues with external walls, most likely on ground floors, and on rare occasions on top floors. If your home is effected, please report the problem to the office.

In an emergency

Fire

Fire is everyone's worst nightmare. Your flat should be equipped with a smoke alarm. Some may be wired into your electrics, like your lights, and some are battery operated. If you hear a beeping coming from the detector then your battery will need to be changed. It is your responsibility to keep checking that your detector is still functional by pressing the large button in the centre of the detector, which is usually red.

To prevent the possibility of fires please do not overload electric sockets, never leave matches or lighters around your flat as they could get into the wrong hands, eg children, and do not store any flammable gasses or petrol in or around your flat.

Remember that smoke can kill as well as flames. If you discover a fire – small or large, or even just something smouldering, tackle it only if you are confident you can handle it. If not, or if you are unsure, evacuate your flat immediately, if safe to do so, and call the Fire Service on 999.

If you feel the fire could also spread into a large block or house fire, please make as many other people aware of the danger as possible.

Gas leak

Never take risks with gas. If you smell gas, open any windows and doors, ensure any gas appliances are switched off and try not to use any electrical equipment. Avoid smoking or naked flames in your property and call TRANSCO immediately. The Telephone number is 0800 111999.

They will send an engineer out to inspect if there is any gas leak. If so they will switch off gas, then you should contact our office or the Havering repairs centre to arrange a contractor to come out to repair the problem

Electrics

Power cuts are very rare, but can happen. If you experience a power cut in your property the first thing to do is to look in your lobby area to see if the lights are on. Then check if your neighbours have electricity. If it seems to be just your property then call us or contact the Havering repairs/out of hours emergency number: 01708 776699

Please never attempt to fix the electrics yourself. If it seems to be a problem throughout your building it is possible that there is an issue with your electricity supplier, and they will most likely already be aware of it.

There are a number of water points within your flat, depending on the type of boiler you have. Those with the latest 'Combi boiler' will have two points of control: usually one under the sink (stopcock) and one in your bathroom/toilet (usually boxed in with just the valve sticking out).

You should be aware that we sometimes have problems operating these valves. If this occurs it may be necessary for one of our maintenance team or a contractor from Havering Council to come out to complete any repairs that are necessary.

Your rights if we get it wrong

Any resident on our estate has the right to complain against BETRA or against those acting on the behalf of BETRA. The complaint must be handled in accordance with the complaints procedure as set by Havering council. A copy of this procedure can be obtained from our office.

Making a complaint

Any resident who wishes to complain about the council or any person/persons acting on their behalf should use the Council's complaints procedure. These complaints should be made directly to the relevant Council department.

Complaints against BETRA could be about:

- the behaviour or performance of an employee of BETRA
- the standard of caretaking
- the speed or standard of any repairs carried out by BETRA
- the behaviour or actions of the management or board.

Complaints covered by the Council could concern:

- the cleaning of the blocks
- water or other utilities on the estate
- roads, car parks and walkways
- TV reception, aerials or public area lighting roofs, roof leaks, missing roof tiles or guttering.

(Neither of these lists are comprehensive or without grey areas, so if in doubt please contact the BETRA office first.)

A complaint can be raised in written form or verbally as long as notes of the complaint are taken, checked, signed and dated by the complainant.

If making a complaint against any party, you have the right to remain anonymous, just make sure that your wishes are clearly stated at the time of making the initial complaint.

Whether the complaint is against BETRA or the Council it will be handled in the same way. If an investigation is required then there will be one carried out. Any findings or resolutions may not necessarily be communicated to you.

Useful contacts

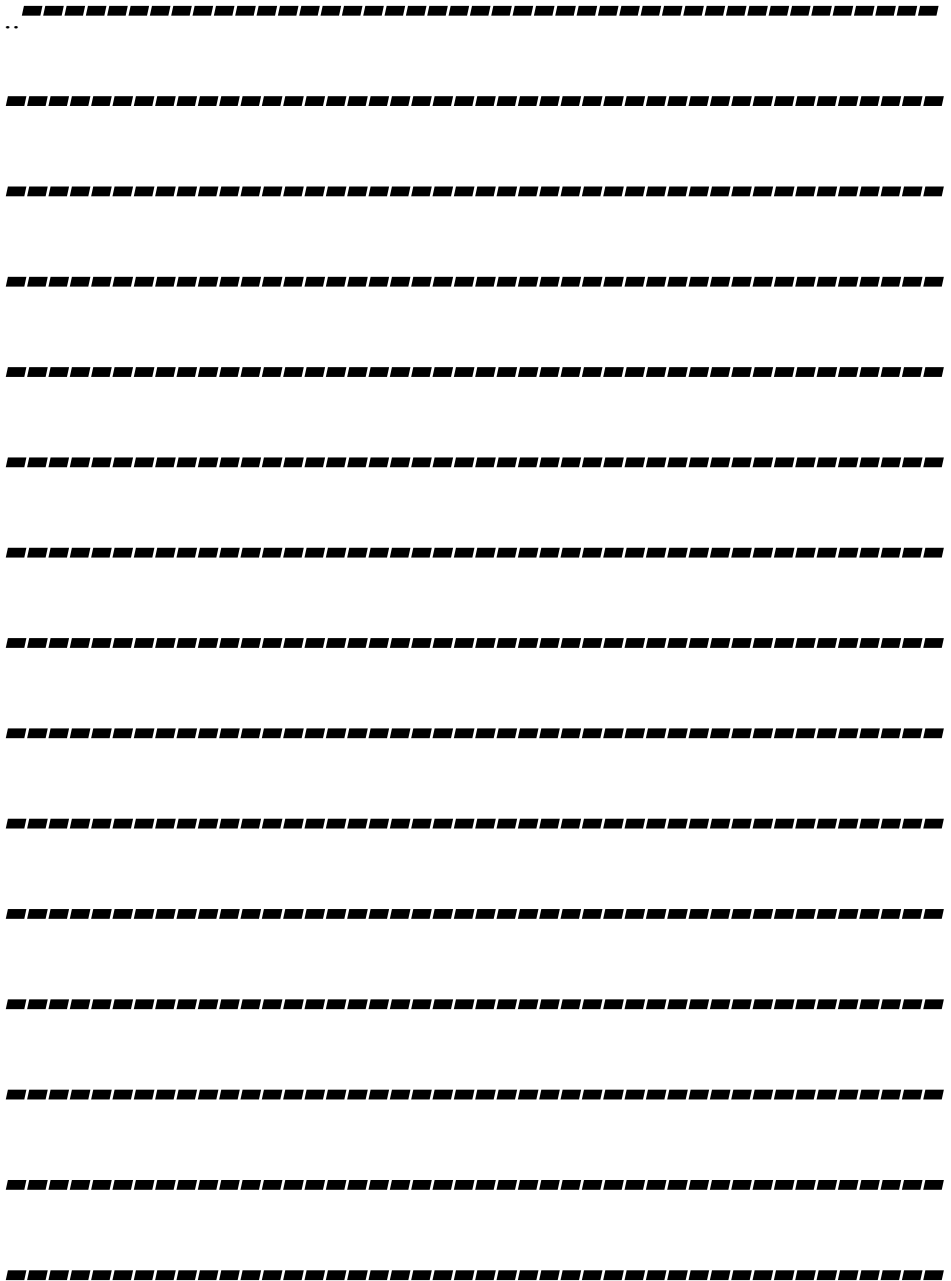
BETRA TMO office.....	01708 344300
Gas leak.....	0800 111999
Havering Housing (Repairs / Rent / General Enquiries)	01708 434000
Havering Council Switch Board (council tax, benefits)....	01708 434343
Havering Streetcare and Refuse.....	01708 432563
Police Emergency.....	999
Non-Urgent.....	101
Romford Police Station	0208 7212594
Domestic Violence Support.....	01708 432927
Victim Support (Havering).....	01708 451000
NSPCC Helpline.....	0808 800 50000
RSPCA.....	03001 234999
MASH (Children).....	01708 433222
MASH (Adults).....	01708 433550
Queens Hospital Romford.....	08451 304204
Local NHS Medical centre (Gooshays Drive).....	01708 796400
Sports centre Central park.....	01708 382820
Myplace.....	01708 340161
Local Library (Hilldene Ave).....	01708 434973

Local Infant and Primary Schools

Brookside Infant School.....	01708 343066
Mead Primary School.....	01708 343616
St.Ursulas Junior School.....	01708 343170
Pyrgo Primary School	01708 342165
Hilldene Primary School.....	01708 342453
Broadford Primary School.....	01708 342880

Local Secondary Schools

Drapers Academy (Senior school).....	01708 371331
Redden Court School.....	01708 342293
Brentwood School.....	01277 243243
Royal Liberty School.....	01708 730141



**BETRA is a not-for-profit community
organisation registered with the Financial
Services Authority, registration number 29444R.**

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