

Appendix 1: Housing Repairs Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide a repairs service to maintain our housing stock and related assets to an acceptable standard.
- 1.2 This policy document sets out our approach to dealing with repairs to council houses and details the following:
 - the objectives of the housing repairs policy
 - access to the service
 - repair responsibilities
 - service standards
 - comments, compliments and complaints
 - monitoring and review
- 1.3 The policy covers the responsive and planned repairs service we provide for the council's housing stock and related assets including:
 - repairs reported directly by customers
 - repairs identified through routine management of the housing stock and estates
 - planned programmes of maintenance, including communal and external areas that we are jointly responsible for with other owners

It excludes improvement work carried out through the Capital Investment Programme and Home+.
- 1.4 The policy is supplemented by more detailed information for customers contained in a range of publications, including the Tenant's Guide to Repairs.
- 1.5 To complement the work carried out to improve our housing stock to the South Lanarkshire, Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), and the Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (ESSH) through the Home+ Programme, the repairs service plays a key part in ensuring that our housing stock is maintained to a high standard.
- 1.6 This policy is effective from 2 July 2018 and replaces all previous policies.

2. Policy objectives

- 2.1 The Council aims to provide customers with a high quality, efficient and comprehensive housing repairs service.
- 2.2 Our policy objectives are to:
 - provide a prompt, efficient and effective housing response repairs service
 - maximise the useful life of our housing stock and related assets

- ensure homes are warm, comfortable and in a good and safe condition of repair and continue to meet the requirements of the South Lanarkshire Standard, SHQS and EESSH
- maximise planned maintenance programmes
- consult and seek feedback from customers to ensure that the services provided are appropriate and effective
- achieve high standards of customer care
- monitor and continuously improve the performance of staff and contractors, taking into account customer feedback
- comply with legal duties, review and where appropriate implement examples of best practice, and ensure value for money
- ensure ease and equality of access to the service

2.3 To help achieve these objectives, we will:

- ensure all customers are provided with clear information on repair responsibilities and what we will do when the repair is our responsibility
- advise customers when they make a request on whether there is a need for an inspection before the work is carried out and make an appointment if we do
- carry out repairs in accordance with our published service standards and complete repairs with minimum disruption and, where possible, at the first visit
- provide an emergency repair service
- carry out post inspection of a range of repairs to ensure that they are completed to the agreed standard
- reclaim costs from customers who wilfully, or through neglect, damage their homes (see section 5 of the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement and page 5 of the Tenants Guide to Repairs)

2.4 Section 5 of this policy sets out our service standards and the arrangements for monitoring progress with the service and achieving our objectives.

3. Access to the service

3.1 The Council are committed to making the housing repairs service open and accessible to all customers.

3.2 There are a number of ways to report repairs, which are designed to make the service as accessible as possible, including:-

- online through our website
- by telephoning,

- writing to, or e-mailing, the Repairs Contact Centre
- through Minicom*
- emergency repairs can be reported outwith office hours by telephoning the emergency out of hours service

3.3 Addresses and telephone numbers are noted in publications and are publicised on the Council's website.

3.4 We will provide a range of clear information on the housing repairs service, including:

- repairs that we are responsible for
- repairs customers are responsible for
- how to report a repair
- how we will respond to repair requests
- carrying out the work
- comments, compliments and complaints

The information provided on the housing repairs service will be updated to reflect any changes in policy or practice as necessary.

3.5 Information on the housing repairs service is issued to all new tenants as part of the tenancy sign-up process and is available on the Council's website.

4. Repair responsibilities

4.1 The Council are responsible for the majority of repairs to the structure and outside of the building and to the fixtures and fittings in the home, to keep the structure of homes in good repair and to keep them wind and watertight. Whilst we are responsible for most repairs, tenants also have a responsibility for some repairs within their home.

4.2 We have a variety of maintenance programmes in place which are carried out on a planned basis, designed to ensure safe and healthy occupancy of the home. These include annual servicing of gas and solid fuel heating systems and five yearly electrical wiring checks. These programmes are carried out without the need for customers to request the work and the main obligation on customers is to provide access to their home in order to complete the works.

*Minicom is a small electronic typewriter and screen linked to a telephone system, which enables people with hearing or speech difficulties to send and receive messages.

4.3 The main types of repairs for which the customer is responsible are detailed within the “Tenants Guide to Repairs” and include:-

- decoration, including repairs to minor cracks or holes in plasterwork
- damage/breakages caused by neglect or carelessness of the customer, their family or visitors to their home
- any floor coverings, including vinyl floor covering fitted as part of the Home+ Programme, but excluding floorboards and concrete flooring
- supplying and fitting plugs and chains to sinks, basins and baths
- fixtures and fittings e.g. curtain rails, decorative light fittings, external lights
- light bulbs, fluorescent tubes or starters, plugs or fuses connected to appliances, unless fitted by the council
- batteries for battery operated smoke alarms
- cookers, refrigerators and washing machines (including the installation of washing machines) unless we provided them as part of a tenancy
- extra door or window locks, spy-holes or security chains
- divisional fencing and outhouses

- shower curtains

The above list is not exhaustive and there may be other types of repairs the customer is responsible for.

4.4 It is recognised that there may be customers who, as a result of their individual circumstances, are unable to carry out repairs they are responsible for. In these situations, additional support and assistance may be available to the customer to complete the repair.

5. Service standards

5.1 When the Council are contacted with a repairs request we will confirm whether the repair is our responsibility and will progress with the repair if it is. We will:

- help identify the repair needed which may include visiting the property to carry out an inspection
- explain to the customer how long it will take to complete the repair or inspection
- offer a convenient appointment time for all inspections and internal repairs
- telephone/write to/text the customer to confirm details of all routine or repairs by appointment repairs

- 5.2 In line with current legislation we operate the 'Tenant's Right to Repair' scheme. This allows customers to arrange for certain repairs to be carried out by an alternative contractor if we have not responded within our publicised timescales. Customers are advised when they report a repair to the Repairs Contact Centre if it is a 'qualifying repair' under this scheme. Compensation will be paid to customers, where appropriate, in line with our statutory obligations. Customers will be required to submit their request for compensation in writing.
- 5.3 It may be necessary for us to carry out an inspection before work is carried out to identify the materials needed to complete the repair. If we do, we will arrange a weekday morning or afternoon appointment time for this visit to take place within five working days of the repair being reported. Where possible we will try to arrange appointment times that are suitable to the customer. During the inspection the Technical Officer will advise the customer of any repair works needed and the anticipated timescale for their completion.
- 5.4 Work will be prioritised and instructed based on the type of repair and the risk posed to health and safety. Repair categories, together with their associated timescales for completion, are noted below:-

- **Emergency repairs** - We aim to complete these repairs within 24 hours. These repairs will generally be attended to within six hours of the fault being reported. No appointments will be made for emergency repairs but we will discuss a suitable time to access customers' homes to make sure that the emergency work can be done. This category of work will generally involve making the fault safe and thereafter we will make an appointment, suitable to the customer, to carry out any further work which may be required.

The types of repairs carried out through this category include, but are not limited to, burst pipes, faulty electrics, no heating, security and health and safety issues.

- **Repairs by appointment** – These are provided for the majority of work where we require access to homes. Where possible we will try to arrange appointment times that are suitable to the customer. We aim to have these works carried out within 20 working days from date of request. With all internal works we aim to have these repairs completed, where possible, at the first visit.

The types of repairs carried out through this category include, but are not limited to, internal repairs to doors, floorboards, plasterwork, electrical and plumbing works.

- **Routine/geographical repairs** - These are provided where the work is not urgent and we do not need access to the home. We aim to have these works carried out within 30 working days from date of request, as part of geographical works programme.

The types of repairs carried out through this category include, but are not limited to, roughcast, boundary fencing, roofing, lock ups, gutters and downpipes.

5.5 For repairs by appointment and routine repairs we will telephone/write to/text customers to confirm the detail of the repair requested and any appointment date and time made.

5.6 **Rechargeable repairs**

Customers will be asked to pay for any repairs that have occurred as a result of:

- damage, or misuse caused by them, their family or visitors to their home
- gaining access into their home and changing locks when they have lost their keys
- the replacement of broken glass

Whilst the list above identifies the most common re-chargeable repairs, it is not exhaustive.

5.7 **Planned and cyclical maintenance**

In addition to responsive repairs, we also carry out planned and cyclical maintenance works. This includes, but is not limited to, cleaning gutters, clothes poles, slab repairs and external paint work.

Through the housing repairs service we also aim to undertake additional work such as gutter cleaning and external paintwork on a planned programme rather than on a responsive basis. This ensures that investment made to bring the housing stock up to the SHQS is protected in the long term.

5.8 **Common repairs**

All property owners have a responsibility to meet a share of the cost of the maintenance of common parts of buildings that the council maintain and these will be recharged to them in accordance with the title deeds or deeds of declaration of conditions for their home.

5.9 **Annual servicing**

The contractors appointed by the service will contact the customer directly to make initial arrangements for access regarding annual servicing of all gas and solid fuel appliances, as well as lifts and fire/intruder alarms etc.

5.10 **Gas safety legislation/solid fuel heating**

We place a high priority on gas and solid fuel safety. All reasonable efforts will be made to arrange a convenient appointment with customers to have these works carried out, but if we are unable to do so, we may need to force entry at a date and time notified to the customer. The cost of forcing entry will be recharged to the customer.

5.11 **Electrical testing**

We place a high priority on electrical testing. All reasonable efforts will be made to arrange a convenient appointment with the customer to have this work carried out.

5.12 **Carrying out the work**

When repair work is being carried out we will treat customer's homes with courtesy and respect. We will:

- always display identification badges
- explain the work we have come to do
- advise which rooms we will need to work in
- advise on whether any furniture, floor coverings (including laminate floor) require to be moved to allow access to complete the work. This is normally the customer's responsibility, however, if help and assistance is required to move carpets or furniture, we will aim to assist
- advise approximately how long the work will take

5.13 We aim to carry out all works with the minimum mess and disruption possible and when the repair is complete, we will remove any debris.

5.14 **Compensation**

Where dehumidifiers are required whilst we try to complete repair works, we will pay compensation based on an agreed daily rate for each day that they are needed.

Where we have caused damage to any fixtures and/or fittings in a customer's home, we will endeavour to repair or replace these and where this is not possible, a third party claim form will be provided. On completion by the customer the claim form will be assessed by our Risk Management Service and any compensation will be paid in accordance with the assessment made.

6. **Comments, compliments and complaints**

6.1 We are committed to providing high quality services to customers, but we know that sometimes we may get this wrong. When this happens we want customers to tell us about it in order that we can put things right. Similarly we want customers to let us know if they are happy with the service we provide.

6.2 There are a range of ways that customers can provide views on the service including:-

- online through our website
- by telephoning, writing to or emailing our Repairs Contact Centre
- by completing and returning a satisfaction questionnaire
- through providing feedback to tenants groups/Local Housing Forums etc

7. Monitoring and review

7.1 To ensure that the policy is achieving the objectives set out in section 2, it will be subject to regular monitoring and review.

7.2 Regular reports on performance will be provided to a range of audiences including:-

- Housing and Technical Resources, Resource Management Team
- Tenant Participation Co-ordination Group – Repairs Sub Group
- Local Housing Forums
- All tenants through Housing News

8. Equal opportunities

8.1 This policy is consistent with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and aims to ensure that we act fairly and lawfully on all occasions. We will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, gender, sexuality, disability, age, religion or other belief.

8.2 An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out to ensure that the policy is inclusive and does not unfairly disadvantage any groups within the community. We will continue to monitor the policy to ensure that it achieves all equalities objectives set.

9. Glossary of Terms

Acceptable Standard:

The acceptable standard is what the council determine as the property being fit for purpose in line with our council house letting standard. This ensures your home:

- is energy efficient
- has modern facilities and services
- is healthy, safe and secure
- is free from serious disrepair

Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS):

All social landlords (including the council) must ensure the homes they rent meet a minimum standard set out by the Scottish Government.

Home+ Programme:

The council's programme for delivering new homes and improving existing homes to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH):

The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) aims to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. It will help to reduce energy consumption, fuel poverty and the emission of greenhouse gases.

Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement (SSTA):

The SSTA was introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. It is a legal agreement which sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and is signed by every council tenant.