

Section 04 Looking after your home



We have a legal duty to repair and maintain your home. We will repair and maintain your home through our day-to-day repairs service and our long-term planned maintenance and improvement programme.

What do I need to tell you when I report a repair?

When you report a repair it helps us if you tell us:

- Your name
- Your full address including postcode
- Your phone number
- The best time for the repair to be done - either morning or afternoon
- What the repair is (for example plumbing, electrical) and where exactly the fault is.

You will be given a reference number for the repair which you should note and use if you make any further enquiries about the repair.

Can I ask someone else to report my repair?

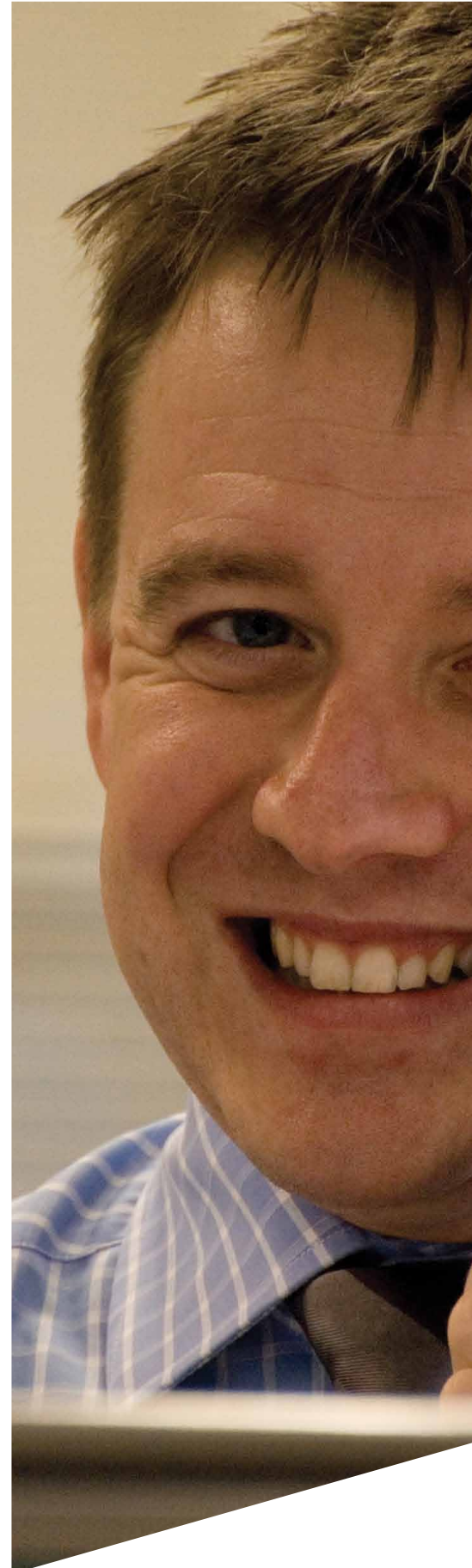
Although it is sometimes possible, particularly in sheltered schemes, to ask a member of staff to report a repair on your behalf, it's most helpful if you report it yourself so that the issue can be diagnosed and understood as fully as possible.

Emergency repairs

Examples of an emergency repair might be:

- Complete loss of power or heating
- A flood or badly leaking pipe
- Something that is a serious risk to the health and safety of you and those around you.


We will assess an emergency repair within 24 hours of you reporting it to us. In many cases the contractors will do your repair during the first visit. Sometimes they have to do a temporary repair to stop the problem getting worse and then return later to carry out a further repair.





How do I report a repair?

As soon as you have a repair that needs to be done you must contact us.

 Please refer to the Company information within Section 01 of this handbook for details of how to do so.

Who's responsible?

Your Tenancy Agreement explains what we will do to repair and maintain your home, and what you are responsible for.

Over time, normal wear and tear happens in every home. However, if your home needs a repair because of neglect or damage by you, your family or visitors, we will expect you to do it and pay for it. We may repair your home on your behalf and recharge you for the work.

If you have questions about whose responsibility a specific repair is please check with your Housing Team.

If damage is accidental, or caused by someone else, it may be possible to make an insurance claim. Please let us know immediately so that we can claim through our insurance or assist you to make an insurance claim. If the damage was the result of criminal damage, contact the Police and obtain a Crime Reference Number. Without this we may not be able to carry out the repair.



Our responsibilities

We are responsible for maintaining:

- The structure and the outside of your home
- The fixtures and fittings we have provided
- Any communal areas.

This includes:

- Drains, gutters and outside pipes
- The roof
- Outside walls and doors, window sills, window catches, sash cords and window frames (including necessary painting and decorating outside)
- Inside walls, floors and ceilings, doors and door frames, door hinges and skirting boards but not including inside painting and decoration
- Maintaining and replacing basins, sinks, baths, showers, toilets, water supply and waste pipes
- Unblocking external waste pipes
- Electric wiring including sockets and switches and wired equipment such as alarms
- Water heaters, fireplaces, fitted fires and central heating installations, chimneys (but not including sweeping)
- Gas pipes and gas appliances provided by us. We check these on a regular basis through a qualified engineer
- Pathways and steps
- Garages and stores, but not sheds
- Boundary walls and fences.

Your responsibilities

You are responsible for the inside of your home. This includes:

- Internal decorating in accordance with your Tenancy Agreement and those repairs which would reasonably be covered by insurance
- Filling small cracks in plaster and filling or covering between skirting and floors
- Putting up curtain rails, adapting doors to accommodate carpets, re-fixing draft excluders
- Repairing or replacing electric plugs, fuses, light bulbs, fluorescent tubes, starter motors on fluorescent light fittings, light switch pull cords, door bells and door bell batteries, and resetting tripped fuses on Residual Circuit Devices (fuse boxes)
- Maintaining your own fittings and appliances
- Plumbing in your own washing machine or dishwasher
- Fitting, maintaining and removing TV aerials and satellite dishes (unless we provide a communal one) but only with our written approval. You may also need planning permission for a satellite dish
- Fitting extra locks, catches or safety devices and replacing lost keys, gaining entry and fitting new locks after being locked out
- Installing or repairing/replacing shelving, coat and hat rails and replacing coat hooks
- Tightening up and replacing missing screws, and renewing kitchen unit catches
- Boarding up broken windows and replacing broken glass
- Supplying and fitting shower rails and curtains

- Clearing blocked wc, sink, bath or shower waste pipes within your home
- Re-fixing toilet seats, bathroom cabinets, towel rails, toilet roll holders and mirrors
- Replacing sink and bath plugs and chains
- Replacing tap washers to stop taps dripping
- Keeping taps and showers free from limescale deposits. You can do this with a limescale removal product which you can get from a supermarket
- Re-lighting boilers and setting heating controls
- Bleeding radiators
- Cleaning off black mould growth caused by condensation
- Maintaining tidy dryers, washing lines and rotary dryers
- Providing or replacing dustbins (unless one is provided by the Council)
- Replacing damaged fencing (apart from privacy panel and boundary fencing).

Do you service my gas appliances?

Every year we must check your gas appliances and pipework in your property, such as gas heating and gas fires. This is a legal requirement. We will write to tell you when this yearly check is due. We will arrange for a qualified gas engineer to make an appointment to visit your home and do the service. We do this to protect you and your family from carbon-monoxide poisoning and to check that your appliances and pipework are safe.

You must let the gas engineer into your home to inspect your gas appliances. If you do not, we will


take legal action to allow us access into your property and you will have to pay for the costs of this action. Help us to keep you safe.

Repressurising Boilers

All combination boilers are now installed as pressurised systems. This allows a specific amount of water to be injected into the system via your mains cold water supply.

Every pressurised system incorporates a pressure gauge which monitors the water pressure in your boilers and radiators.

To maintain the boiler and system in a healthy condition, the pressure gauge should be checked regularly. Most systems should be pressurised to between 1 and 1.5 bar. If when you check it you find that the system pressure has fallen below 1 bar, please report as you would a routine repair (this will also be checked as part of the annual gas safety inspection).

 Please refer to the Company information within Section 01 of this handbook for details of how to report a repair.

Do not attempt to top up the pressure yourself. It can be dangerous and you may contaminate your drinking water if it is done incorrectly.

Home improvement

Do you make improvements to my home?

We organise planned maintenance work to make sure your home stays in good condition. We do know the condition of our homes and plan well in advance for large-scale improvements (such as replacement windows) to make sure they meet the Decent Homes Standard.



For day-to-day repairs (such as a roof repair or blocked drain) please refer to the Company information with Section 01 of this handbook.

We will invite you to share your views and opinions about the repairs service through a repairs survey, which we will send each time you have a repair completed in your home.

We will also tell you about any planned maintenance work for your home. When we have confirmed the year's programme, we will keep you up to date and involved. For example, we will give you a choice of colours and design when we replace kitchens and bathrooms. We will also check that you are satisfied with the work when it is completed.

Will you make adaptations to my home?

If you or someone you live with needs help to live independently in your home, we will do our best to help. We may be able to improve or provide aids and adaptations to your home or help you move to a home that more readily meets your needs.

We make money available every year for this kind of work. We work in partnership with local councils to make sure we can provide the most efficient service to our customers. Many people ask us for help to provide adaptations to their homes. We can complete small jobs such as fitting grab rails, but we will also consider larger jobs such as fitting a level-access shower. Sometimes larger requests have to go on a waiting list. We consider every request we receive.

The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is available to meet the costs of all adaptations to your home. This is means tested and is subject to a visit from an occupational therapist who will assess your personal long-term needs. The local council

will assess whether you qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant. If you think you could benefit from this type of help, contact your Housing Team.

Can I make my own improvements to my home?

If you want to improve or make changes to your home you must ask us to approve the work first. You have to pay for this type of work but you may have the right to compensation if you do this work in the way we ask you to. We will pay this compensation at the end of your tenancy. If you owe us rent or any other debts we will pay them off first. Please don't start any work without talking to us first.

Asbestos

If your property was built before the year 2000 it may have materials containing asbestos. We will advise you if your property has known asbestos and where it is. If the condition of the asbestos is considered to be a risk to health we will remove or encapsulate it. If you have any concerns, please contact your Housing Team.



The Contractors' Code of Conduct

We monitor the performance of our contractors. We check the quality of their work and the way they behave. We give our contractors a Code of Conduct to make sure they know what we expect from them.

Here are the main points of the code:

Contractors and their employees must:

- Keep all appointments they make with you
- Let us know if they need to change an appointment
- Arrive fully equipped to do the work required
- Keep all work areas clean and tidy and remove their rubbish
- Use dustsheets or protective coverings when doing work that will create dirt or dust
- Work during normal working hours wherever possible
- Explain any delays to you and us
- Carry identification and show it when asked
- Get permission from you if they want to use your toilet, water, electricity or phone
- Get permission from us if they need to use hazardous materials
- Give you notice when they need to cut off your gas or electricity supply
- Agree a start time with you if they need to use noisy equipment

- Take particular care around children when using sharp tools or toxic substances
- Be polite, considerate and well mannered at all times
- Leave the site immediately if a violent situation develops.

Contractors must never:

- Swear or be abusive
- Discuss any other residents, us, our staff or other properties or contractors
- Harass or make inappropriate comments about your lifestyle, appearance or circumstances
- Smoke in your home
- Play stereos or other audio equipment
- Do any work under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol.

What we expect from you

- If you can't keep an appointment please let us know as soon as possible and always before the contractor is due to come to your property
- Allow the contractor access to your home so that they can carry out the repair
- Respect the contractor - do not use abusive language, violence or inappropriate behaviour
- Check the contractor's identification before you let them into your home

- The contractor may have more appointments to keep. Please allow them to carry out the repair to your home as quickly as possible
- Do not leave young children alone in your property. We do not allow our contractors to enter a property with young children at home, unless there is an adult present
- Please do not smoke while staff and contractors are in your home.

Site-based staff

If you live on a scheme you may have a member of staff who lives and works there. They provide our maintenance service by:

- Taking reports of repair problems from you
- Inspecting the problem
- In some cases, carrying out some minor repairs
- Reporting large maintenance issues to the local office
- Checking the standard of workmanship and general behaviour of contractors on site.

These members of staff will be happy to help you.



Right to repair

In certain circumstances you will be able to claim the 'right to repair'. This means you have the right to have us do small urgent repairs or emergency repairs within our timescales. If your home needs an emergency or urgent repair costing less than £250 and we fail to carry out the same repair after two opportunities, you will be entitled to compensation up to a maximum of £50.

This compensation will be:

- £10 immediately
- £2 per day for every day the repair is not completed after the second deadline.

We will also provide you with the opportunity to deploy your own contractor if the repair has not been carried out within our timescales. However, to be able to do this you must notify us of your intention to do so and obtain three separate quotes for the work.



Diagnosing repairs - what to look for...

To make it easier for us to send the right people out with the right tools please try and tell us a bit about your repair. You may find the following guidelines useful.

Baths:

If there is a leak:

- Is it when the bath is overfilled?
- Is it when it is emptied?
- Which pipe is it on?
- Has it caused any damage to your home?
- If there is a leak on the supply pipe is it the hot or cold one?
- If the bath is blocked have you tried to unblock it? Try doing this before you ask us to send a contractor out to your home. A build up of hair, solidified shampoo and hair gel can cause blockages. To remove this try filling the bath with some very hot water (hotter than you would bath in) then simply take the plug out. The heat from the water may melt any residuals and the force of the water will push them down, or use a plunger.

Sinks and washbasins:

Please tell us the following:

- Where is the sink with the problem (i.e. toilet, bathroom, kitchen)?
- What is the nature of the problem (i.e. crack, leak, blockage)?
- Have you tried to clear any blockages (see advice regarding baths)?
- If there is a leak on the supply pipe is it the hot or cold one?

Taps:

Please tell us the following:

- Where in the house is the tap?
- Is it the hot, cold or mixer tap that is the problem?
- Is it a lever tap?
- Where is the problem on the tap? (Find out where the stopcock is in case you need to turn off the water.)

Toilet:

Please tell us the following:

- Is the pan cracked or broken?
- Are any pipes or joints leaking?
- Does the toilet only leak when flushed?
- Has the water supply been turned off?
- Do you have a second toilet in the property?

Locks:

Please tell us the following:

- Which lock is affected and do you have any other way of securing the door?
- What type of lock is it?
- Has the door been forced open - if so do you have a crime number?
- What is the door made of?

Windows:

Please tell us the following:

- Is the window single or double glazed?
- Is it clear or frosted glass?
- Are there any obvious

problems like visible cracks, cracks in the sealant, missing putty?

- Which floor is it on and which room is it in?

Overflows:

Please tell us the following:

- Can you identify the overflow that is causing the problem?
- Where does it go (i.e. outside)?
- Is the overflow running continuously?

Heating system:

Please tell us the following:

- Do you have any other forms of heating (can you access hot water)?
- Are there any vulnerable people in the house (people with medical needs or disabilities for example)?
- What type of heating system do you have (gas, electric)?
- Do you know how to set the programmer?

Heating:

- Make sure you know how to set the programmer for your heating
- Before reporting a fault, check the boiler is on. If not, follow the instructions on the boiler to re-ignite it.

Electricity

What happens if all my electrics go off?

Do not take any action unless you are completely confident to do so. If you are at all unsure please call us.

You should go to your consumer unit (fuse box) and check to see if any switches have turned to the 'off' position. If the main switch has turned itself off, you should do the following:

- 1** Turn off all the individual switches. Fuses should not be removed
- 2** Reset the main switch to the 'on' position
- 3** Reset each switch to 'on'
- 4** The faulty switch will not stay switched on.

A switch which has turned to the 'off' position may be switched back on if the original fault is known to have been 'cleared' e.g. a faulty appliance removed or a light bulb changed.

What if the consumer unit (fuse box) switches are all in the 'on' position, yet there is no electrical power?

If no switches have turned to the 'off' position this would suggest an external power failure. Check with your neighbours to see if they still have electricity.

What do I do if my power socket(s) do not work?

Have you just plugged in or turned on a portable appliance such as a radio, kettle or vacuum cleaner? If you have, that appliance is likely to be the cause of the loss of electricity and should not be reused without being checked by an electrician. You will have to arrange this yourself.

Following the failure of electricity socket(s) to work:

- 1** Unplug the appliance that may be faulty. If you do not know which one caused the fault, you should unplug them all
- 2** Go to the main consumer unit (fuse box)
- 3** Reset the main switch to the 'on' position
- 4** Check which switches have tripped to the 'off' position and put them back to 'on'
- 5** Plug in each appliance in turn. When the faulty appliance is plugged in the electricity will fail again. Reset the switches in the consumer unit as above, after unplugging the faulty appliance.





Safety and security in your home

Here are some tips to help keep your home safe and secure.

When you move in make sure you:

- Know where your gas, electricity and water meters are and how they work. If they take coins, cards or tokens, make sure you have plenty of them
- Find your fuse box
- Find your mains switch for the electricity - this is usually next to the consumer unit (fuse box)
- Find your stopcock so that you can turn off your water supply in an emergency
- Keep a torch nearby in case the electricity supply goes off when it is dark.



Your scheme staff or Housing Team should be able to help you find these. Please refer to the Company information within Section 01 of this handbook for contact details.

Fuses

- Fuses or circuit breakers will stop the supply of electricity if there is a fault on the wiring or with the electrical appliance you are using
- Unplug or switch off at the main plug socket anything you think may have caused the problem
- Switch off the electricity at the mains supply
- Check which fuse has blown - the wire is likely to be burnt
- Replace the burnt fuse wire. You will need to have a supply of fuse wire in your home. You may also need to change the fuse
- Switch the electricity back on
- If the fuse blows again straight away or quite soon afterwards, report it to us as a fault that needs to be checked by an electrician.

Circuit breakers

Circuit breakers (also called RCDs) automatically switch off the electricity when there is a fault.

- Unplug or switch off at the wall anything you think may have caused the problem
- Switch off the electricity at the mains
- Find the switch on the circuit board that has turned itself to the 'off' position, and turn it back to the 'on' position
- If the switch cuts off again, report it to us as a fault that needs to be checked by an electrician
- If you think your appliance is faulty, try putting a new fuse of the correct voltage in the plug.

For help with any of the above, please contact your Housing Team.

Preventing damp and mould in your home

Condensation can cause damp and mould in your home. We have produced a leaflet 'Condensation in the Home' which you can find at your local office.

There are three steps to reducing condensation:

- 1** Produce less moisture.
For example - cover pans when they are boiling, dry your washing in the bathroom with the door closed and a window open, and vent your tumble dryer
- 2** Ventilate your home.
For example - open windows in your kitchen and bathroom when you are cooking or bathing
- 3** Heat your home.



Central heating

Make sure you know how your hot water and heating systems work

- Remember that gas heating can be dangerous - keep flues and ventilation grilles clear at all times
- If you have a gas heater for hot water in your bathroom, make sure the room is well ventilated. Turn the heater off before you get into the bath
- Always let us in to service your gas appliances every year. If you smell gas, ring National Grid on 0800 111 999, then contact your Housing Team.

What do I do if a pipe bursts?

Burst pipes can happen in the colder months.

What to do:

- 1** Switch off your electricity source in case water has seeped through into electric switches or lighting
- 2** Turn off your water stopcock which is normally under the sink
- 3** Turn on all taps so the water drains through the sinks
- 4** If you have an immersion heater or central heating system, turn it off
- 5** Report the burst pipe to us.

If you are going away during winter keep your central heating on low to avoid burst pipes and turn off your stopcock.

If your pipes freeze:

- Report it to us straight away
- Turn your heating to low so that your pipes defrost slowly
- Drain the water out of the system and leave the taps turned on
- When the ice in the pipes begins to melt, turn the taps off.

If you are going on holiday, be sure to:

- Close and lock all windows and doors
- Cancel milk and paper deliveries
- Ask a neighbour to keep an eye on your house and to push your post through your letter box
- Use a timer switch to make lights come on in the evening while you are away.



Protect yourself against fire

- Every month check that your smoke detector is working
- Keep matches and lighters in a safe place. Always make sure you put out any cigarettes properly
- Don't leave pans unattended on the cooker
- Don't cover heaters or boilers.

If a fire starts in your home:

- Get yourself and everyone else out of the property
- Close the door behind you if you can to stop the flames and smoke escaping
- Call the Fire Service on 999
- Warn your neighbours
- Do not go back into your home until a fire officer has told you it is safe to do so.

If you live in a high-rise building, a complex of flats or sheltered accommodation, there may be special fire procedures. The staff on site will give you the details.

Protect your home

There are several things you can do to feel safer in your home, for example:

- Fit a carbon monoxide alarm
- Fit window locks to all your windows
- Join or set up a Neighbourhood Watch scheme on your street or estate. Find out more on www.neighbourhoodwatch.net or ring your local team
- Report suspicious activities to the police
- Don't leave valuables (your mobile phone, purse or wallet) on a window sill where they can be seen from the outside.

If you can help the police reduce crime in your community, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.