



## **Housing Repairs Policy**

## **Introduction**

There has been a Highland Council Repairs Policy since April 1999. This has recently been reconsidered as part of the Repairs Review and a revised policy is set out below. The policy was approved by the Housing and Social Work Committee on 11 August 2004, with a minor amendment by Housing and Social Work Committee on 16 March 2005.

### **1. Objectives of the Repairs Policy**

- to provide a prompt, efficient and effective response repairs service
- to ensure that tenants have clear information about the operation of the repairs service
- to achieve high standards of customer care
- to comply with legislation relating to the repairs duties of Councils
- to ensure that homes are warm and dry and in a good state of repair
- to maximise the useful life of the housing stock by achieving a balance in spending on planned maintenance and day to day repairs
- to monitor the performance of the repairs service by taking into account feedback from tenants

### **2. Reporting Repairs**

The following principles of repairs reporting procedures will apply:

- new tenants will be supplied with a Repairs Book that provides information on how to report repairs in person or by telephone. This includes information on how to report repairs during and outside office hours;
- procedures will be simple and accessible to tenants;
- clear arrangements will be made for reporting emergency repairs out of office hours;
- all housing staff will accept repair requests and report repairs which come to their attention;
- staff who receive repair requests will have appropriate technical and customer service training;
- tenants will receive a letter confirming the repair request, timescale for completion and contractor details. In addition, they will receive a repairs satisfaction questionnaire to complete and return to the area housing office.

### **3. Responsibility for Repairs**

- 3.1 The Council has a legal obligation to keep the structure of the house in good repair and to keep it wind and watertight but responsibility for repairs is shared between the Council and tenants. The table below shows whether the Council or tenant is responsible. The Council will monitor properties where there is a high incidence of repairs and take any necessary management action.

**Bathroom - Who is responsible?**

	<b>Us</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Baths	✓		
Shower unit		✓	Unless we provided it
Toilet bowl	✓		
Toilet cistern	✓		
Toilet seat	✓		
Wash hand basin	✓		
Taps	✓		
Plugs and chains		✓	

**Doors - Who is responsible?**

	<b>Us</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Outside doors including hinges, handles and letterbox	✓		
Door name plate		✓	
Door bell		✓	Unless we provided it
Door locks (outside)	✓		Unless you have broken or lost the key
Keys		✓	
Glass in door or screen	✓		Unless caused by vandalism
Inside doors		✓	
Locks on inside doors		✓	
Door entry system	✓		

**Electricity - Who is responsible?**

	<b>Us</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Electric plugs		✓	
Electric wiring (including sockets)	✓		
Fuse box, fuses/MCB	✓		
Fuses (main) ELCB	✓		
Fuse on plug		✓	
Light holder (including pendants and ceiling roses)	✓		
Light bulbs		✓	
Fluorescent tubes & starters		✓	

<b>Heating- Who is responsible?</b>
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	<b>Us</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Ash carrier or pan		✓	
Fire nest or basket	✓		
Fire front, surrounds and hearth	✓		
Fireplace tiles		✓	
Fire tools		✓	
Solid fuel central heating	✓		
Back boiler	✓		
Coal bunkers	✓		Only if you have solid fuel heating provided by us
Chimney sweeping		✓	
Gas fires	✓		
Gas central heating (including water pipes, radiators, timers, thermostats, pumps, etc.	✓		
Gas water heater	✓		
Gas piping	✓		
Electric fires	✓		Only if electric fire is provided by us
Electric central heating	✓		
Immersion heater	✓		
Oil central heating	✓		
Any heating appliance or system fitted by you		✓	

<b>Kitchens - Who is responsible?</b>
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	<b>Us</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Cookers		✓	Unless we provided it
Kitchen work tops	✓		
Kitchen units	✓		
Sink bowl and drainer	✓		
Any kitchen fittings provided by you		✓	
Clothes pulley		✓	

<b>Plumbing - Who is responsible?</b>
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	<b>Us</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Down pipe (soil and rain)	✓		
Drains	✓		
Guttering	✓		
Overflow	✓		
Water supply (including cold & hot water storage tanks and pipes)	✓		
Tap washers	✓		
Sink plugs and chains		✓	
Washing machines and fittings		✓	Unless we provided it

<b>Structure - Who is responsible?</b>
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	<b>Us</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Chimney including pots and cowls	✓		
Roof including slates and tiles	✓		
Roof skylight	✓		
Fascia boards/soffit boards etc.	✓		
Brick work	✓		
Rough cast	✓		
Foundations	✓		
Damp-proof course	✓		
Walls	✓		
Plaster/plasterboard	✓		
Floors	✓		
Ventilator	✓		
Skirting boards	✓		
Loft hatch	✓		
Stairs (inside)	✓		
Banister	✓		
Stairs (outside)	✓		
Steps to entrance	✓		
Porches	✓		
Handrail (outside)	✓		

<b>Windows - Who is responsible?</b>
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	<b>Us</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Glass in outside windows	✓		
Glass panels or screens inside	✓		
Glass triple/double glazed	✓		
Window frames	✓		
Window fittings and catches	✓		
Window sill	✓		
Ropes for sash cord windows	✓		

<b>Other - Who is responsible?</b>
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	<b>Us</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Boundary fences or walls	✓		
Fences between gardens		✓	
Gates	✓		
Driveways		✓	Unless part of pedestrian access
Path giving main access to house	✓		
Other paths in garden		✓	
Garages	✓		Only if it was provided by us
Greenhouses		✓	
Garden sheds		✓	
Outbuildings		✓	Unless it was provided by us
Pigeon lofts		✓	
Drying areas	✓		
Parking areas (communal)	✓		
Clothes poles	✓		
Rotary driers	✓	✓	Personal rotary driers are your responsibility.
Ropes for pulleys, rotary driers or poles		✓	
Communal areas to flats	✓		
Communal stair lighting	✓		
Inside decoration		✓	
Outside decoration	✓		
Inside cupboards		✓	
Smoke alarms	✓		Replacing batteries is your responsibility
Carbon monoxide detectors	✓		Only if fitted by us
Floor coverings including Laminate flooring		✓	
Washing machines and driers	✓		Only if provided by us

#### **4. Rechargeable Repairs**

4.1 As well as being responsible for repairs which are listed above, tenants are also responsible for:

- those repairs which are necessary because of wilful damage or negligence by the tenant, anyone living in the house or a visitor to the house;
- work that may be required when moving out of a house to bring it up to an acceptable standard for a new tenant. This includes items such as
  - cleaning out houses
  - cutting grass
  - removing rubbish from gardens
  - removing rubbish from rooms and attics
  - lifting and removing floor coverings
  - removing panelling, tiles, shelves and other fixtures which have been badly fitted and repairing or replacing plaster or plasterboard

4.2 Standard charges for the more common rechargeable repairs apply throughout all Areas of the Council. These include standard supplements if the repair has to be carried out within a timescale that is shorter than the routine timescale of 20 working days. These standard charges will be reviewed each year at the same time as the Housing Revenue Budget.

4.3 When a repair is reported which is a rechargeable item, tenants will be immediately advised of the cost if there is a standard charge. If the item is not contained in the list of standard charges, then estimates may have to be given and tenants advised that the final cost of the repair may vary from the estimate. Tenants can then make a decision on whether they want the Council to carry out the repair or whether they wish to make arrangements to have the repair done themselves.

4.4 If the Council has to carry out a rechargeable repair to keep the property wind and watertight or for health and safety reasons, tenants will be told verbally of the cost of the repair followed by a written explanation.

4.5 If tenants are unwilling or unable to pay for a rechargeable repair or already have outstanding maintenance debts, a decision will be made by the Housing Maintenance Officer on whether the repair is necessary to keep the property wind and watertight or for health and safety reasons. Where this is the case, the cost of any repairs will remain as a charge against the tenant.

4.6 All tenants should be recharged with items which are their responsibility. In exceptional cases a decision will be made not to recharge. These will include:

- tenants who have a disability which causes wear and tear on the property, for example, wheelchairs damaging walls;
- tenants who have damage caused to their houses through no fault of their own and which is the subject of a police report;
- other cases at the discretion of the Area Housing Manager

4.7 Tenants who do not agree with decisions made about any aspect of rechargeable repairs can complain under the Councils Corporate Complaints Procedure

## 5. Repairs Categories and Timescales

5.1 Although the Council intends to respond to every repair as quickly as possible, it is necessary to categorise repairs and give some a higher priority than others especially because the Council has to pay a contractor more for carrying out emergency work.

5.2 Repairs will be categorised as follows:

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|------------------------------------|--|
| ▪ Emergency                        | Immediate response   |
| ▪ High Priority                    | Within 3 working days  |
| ▪ Routine                          | Within 20 working days   |
| ▪ Routine with inspection required | Within 30 working days   |
| ▪ Low priority programmed work     | Within a timescale agreed with the contractor with the time for completion agreed at the start of the work |
| ▪ Minor work                       | By quotation with the time for completion stated on the quotation  |

5.3 Emergency and high priority work can be broadly defined as follows:

- Emergency** Where there is an immediate risk:
- to life and limb
  - of serious damage to the property
  - to the security of the property

- High Priority** Where delay could cause:
- danger to life and limb
  - damage to property
  - a security risk

5.4 All qualifying repairs in terms of the Right to Repair legislation will be carried out in the emergency and high priority timescales.

5.5 Routine repairs which do not require inspection will be done within 20 working days. Routine repairs which require an inspection will be done in 30 working days. Some of these routine works will also be held back if it is known that other properties in the street, estate, village or settlement require the same work. A small programme of low priority work will then be drawn up. This category of repair will be especially appropriate for work of a preventative nature such as gutter cleaning, fencing and path repairs.

5.6 Exceptions to the timescales would only be made where, for medical or social reasons, carrying out the repair in the normal timescale would cause suffering to the occupiers.

5.7 Occasions may arise when, due to budget restrictions, certain categories of repair may have to be suspended. Tenants will be informed, in writing, in all cases where a repair is delayed or held. The reason for the delay will be explained and the likely timescale for the repair to be completed will be given.

## **6. Re-let Repairs**

6.1 The Council wishes to re-let its properties as quickly as possible so that people waiting for houses can move in. However it is also important that the properties are in a good condition for the new tenants.

6.2 Timescales to carry out repairs to a property are dependant on its condition. Repairs to empty properties will be carried out within the following timescales:

- five working days
- ten working days
- twenty working days (only in exceptional circumstances where extensive repairs are required)

6.3 When a property is re-let the following standards will apply:

- it will be wind and watertight
- it will be free from damp
- it will be in a clean condition
- it will be secure
- access to the property will be safe
- the garden will be cleared of rubbish and grass cut where it would be difficult to cut with domestic equipment
- doors and windows will be in working order
- gas and electrical supplies will be checked for safety and will be in good working order. A copy of the report on the last gas servicing visit will be made available to the new tenant
- plumbing services will be checked and in working order
- heating systems will be safe and in working order
- chimneys will be swept
- internal glazing will be intact and comply with safety standards
- floors will be stable and free from collapse or rot
- there will be no polystyrene tiles in the property
- there will be a functioning bath or shower, toilet and wash hand basin
- kitchen units will be overhauled and repaired with a minimum standard being the provision of a sink, double base unit and double wall unit where space allows
- smoke alarms will be in working order
- banisters and balustrades will be safe
- plaster on walls and ceilings will be checked and repaired
- installations by former tenants will be left if they are safe
- any known asbestos present / inspected / removed or labelled will be recorded.

- 6.4 In order to re-let properties as quickly as possible not all repairs are necessary before the new tenant moves in. Some are essential and these would include repairs
- essential to make the property habitable for health, safety and security;
  - which are impractical to do in an occupied property;
  - considered essential to achieve a quick letting;
  - that involve the removal of substandard alterations made by tenants.

## **7. Decoration Allowance**

- 7.1 The Council will not generally carry out any redecoration work on empty properties and all redecoration work, including stripping wallpaper, will be left to new tenants. Instead, tenants will be given a decoration allowance which will be assessed on a room by room basis when the house is empty. The maximum allowance for each room requiring decoration will be increased by the same percentage as the rent increase on an annual basis.
- 7.2 In the case of transfers, if redecoration requirements are only revealed when the property is empty, the estimated cost of the work will be deducted from any redecoration allowance payable for the new tenancy.
- 7.3 The decoration allowance will be paid by cheque on production of receipts within one month of taking up the tenancy. Alternatively an order can be raised by the Housing Service with nominated suppliers to supply paint and wallpaper to the value of the agreed decoration allowance. This should be used within one month of taking up the tenancy.
- 7.4 Exceptions to the policy will be:
- sheltered and amenity houses where redecoration will be carried out by the Council if this is required;
  - houses fully adapted for wheelchair use where redecoration will be carried out by the Council if this is required;
  - exceptional individual cases at the discretion of the Area Housing Manager. This will include houses which are in very bad decorative condition and where the maximum decoration allowance will not cover the cost of redecoration. In these cases, the outgoing tenant will be billed for the cost of the work.
- 7.6 Where decoration is carried out by the Council it will be to an agreed common standard.

## **8. Allowable Repairs When a Right To Buy Application Exists**

- 8.1 Until the purchase is completed, the Council must keep in good repair, the structure and exterior of the property and keep in good repair and proper working order, the installations in the house for the supply of water, gas, oil and electricity and for sanitation.

- 8.2 Additionally, the Council is obliged to carry out all qualifying repairs under the Tenants Right to Repair. Repairs will be continued to be re-charged if the tenant has caused damage to the property or fittings.
- 8.3 Repairs that are not qualifying repairs will not be carried out on properties where the tenant has submitted a Right to Buy application.
- 8.4 The Council has an obligation to carry out an annual gas service/safety check on an annual basis until the date that the house is sold.

## **9. Monitoring Performance**

- 9.1 The Housing Service has made the delivery of high quality services one of its goals in the Local Housing Strategy 2003-8 and it is also one of the goals of the Housing Service Plan 2002-5. In approving the Housing Business Plan in March 2003, it was agreed that the Housing Service would report quarterly to the Housing and Social Work Committee on service targets. These reports include performance against statutory performance indicators.
- 9.2 The Council will use management information to assess the effectiveness of the current policy and to inform regular reviews of policy and procedures. The objectives of the management information system are as follows:
- To measure the extent to which customers needs and expectations are met ;
  - To measure the quality of the service that is provided;
  - To monitor resources used to provide the service to ensure that it is cost effective;
  - To identify responsibilities for improving performance;
  - To provide good quality performance information that can be used to identify strengths and weaknesses and staff training needs;
  - To identify and share best practice across Areas;
  - To provide information that allows benchmarking with other registered social landlords