

Highland Council Housing Repairs — Responsibilities

1. Highland Council Responsibilities

The Council is responsible for repairing and maintaining the structure and fabric of the property, together with all fittings and appliances originally provided by the Council.

Structure, Fabric and External Elements

- Repairing and maintaining the structure and fabric of the property, including all external parts
- Maintaining the main structure of the property (walls, roof, foundations)
- Repairing and maintaining all pipes, wiring, fixtures and fittings for heating, drainage, power and lighting
- Maintaining all internal fixtures, fittings and appliances originally provided by the Council (e.g. electric fires, smoke detectors)
- Repairing and maintaining fences and walls that border public areas (but not those dividing adjoining gardens, unless the lease states otherwise)
- Maintaining steps and main paths that lead to the main doors of the property
- Repairing garages, brick outhouses, stores or sheds originally provided by the Council
- Maintaining whirlygigs located in communal areas for shared use

Communal Areas (Flats and Maisonettes)

- Maintaining all common areas and facilities in blocks of flats or maisonettes
- Maintaining communal gardens and open areas around Council properties
- Replacing and maintaining light bulbs and fittings in communal areas or where a bulkhead light has been fitted by the Council
- Repairing communal TV aerials where tenants currently pay a service charge towards this

Baths and Basins

- Repairing or replacing bathroom fittings (bath, basin, sink, shower tray) that are loose, broken or defective
- Repairing or replacing wastepipes that are leaking
- Repairing or replacing cracked or broken splashback wall tiles (note: colour match cannot be guaranteed)
- Repairing or replacing bath panels (side or end)

Doors and Locks

- Repairing or replacing external door frames, locks and latches that are defective through fair wear and tear

- Making the property safe and secure in an emergency (e.g. if an external door cannot be locked or bolted), with a full repair to follow
- Repairing locks or handles on external doors damaged by vandalism or break-in (subject to a Police report being made)

Drains and Wastes

- Clearing and repairing choked or leaking main drains, soil stacks and external drainage runs
- Repairing or replacing gully grids that are missing or damaged

Electrics

- Repairing faults in the fixed electrical installation (wiring, consumer unit, sockets, switches, light fittings)
- Replacing or repairing extractor fans
- Repairing mains-wired smoke detectors

Fences and Gates

- Repairing boundary fences and walls that adjoin public areas (not dividing fences between gardens)
- Repairing or replacing gates that are part of the Council's boundary responsibility

Floors and Stairs

- Repairing or replacing defective floorboards, chipboard or structural floor surfaces
- Repairing loose or broken stair treads, risers, newel posts and balustrades
- Repairing or replacing loose or broken handrails and banister rails
- Fitting an extra handrail on request for disabled or elderly tenants (following a Social Work Services assessment)

Garages and Sheds (Council-Provided)

- Repairing garages, brick outhouses and stores originally provided by the Council (low-priority — subject to budget availability)

Gutters and Downpipes

- Repairing or replacing gutters, downpipes, brackets, joints and shoes that are loose, leaking or damaged

Heating and Hot Water

- Repairing and maintaining the central heating system, boiler, radiators, pipework and associated controls
- Carrying out an annual gas safety check in every property with a gas supply
- Repairing gas fires, electric storage heaters, warm-air units and other heating appliances originally provided by the Council
- Repairing or replacing hot-water cylinders and immersion heaters

Kitchen Fittings

- Repairing or replacing kitchen wall and floor units, worktops and sinks that are loose, damaged or defective through fair wear and tear (note: colour or style match cannot be guaranteed)

Pipes and Taps

- Repairing or replacing burst, frozen or leaking water pipes
- Repairing or replacing defective taps, ball valves and overflows
- Repairing overflow pipes that are running

Roofs and Chimneys

- Repairing or replacing loose, missing or damaged roof tiles or slates
- Repairing or replacing ridge tiles, hip tiles, flashings and verge pointing
- Repairing loose, fallen or crumbling chimney pots, cowls, flaunching or chimney stacks
- Repairing fascias, soffits and barge boards

Toilets

- Repairing or replacing defective toilet cisterns, flush mechanisms, soil pipes and toilet pans

Walls and Ceilings

- Repairing structural cracks or significant plaster defects on internal walls and ceilings
- Investigating and remedying penetrating damp or rising damp caused by structural defects
- Repairing damage caused by contractor negligence

Windows

- Repairing or replacing defective window frames, stays, fasteners and hinges
- Repairing double-glazed units that have failed

Pest Control

- Providing a free pest control service to all Council tenants and Council premises
- Treating most types of pest infestation, including rats, mice, ants, wasps and fleas
- Investigating and treating infestations where the cause is a structural defect in the property (e.g. rodents entering through gaps in walls, floors, foundations or around utility pipes)
- Taking action where a pest problem existed in the property prior to the tenant moving in
- Not treating bees unless they pose a direct risk to householders (e.g. a swarm inside the property or chimney); providing details of local beekeepers where possible
- Not treating bats, which are a protected species; directing tenants to Scottish Natural Heritage for advice

Planned and Improvement Works

- Carrying out planned programmes of major repairs and improvements (e.g. replacement of windows, doors, central heating)
- Informing tenants in advance of any planned improvement works to their home

2. Tenant Responsibilities

Tenants are responsible for keeping the property in good decorative order, maintaining appliances they have installed, and repairing any damage caused by themselves, members of their household or visitors.

Damage and Misuse

- Being responsible for the cost of repairs needed as a result of neglect or failure to report a problem promptly
- Repairing damage caused by pets belonging to themselves or members of their household

General Property Care

- Keeping the property clean and in good decorative order
- Keeping the garden tidy
- Taking precautions to prevent further damage once a repair fault has been identified, and reporting it promptly to the Council
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, members of their household or any visitors
- Maintaining any appliances they have installed (e.g. fire, shower, cooker)
- Reporting any criminal damage or vandalism to the Police
- Always requesting permission in writing before carrying out any DIY or improvement works

Fixtures and Fittings You Installed

- Being responsible for maintaining, repairing or removing any fixture, fitting, appliance or alteration installed or carried out without the Council's written permission — including bearing the full cost of any remedial work required
- Maintaining, repairing or removing any fixture or fitting installed by a previous tenant where the Council has not accepted responsibility for it

Baths and Basins

- Cleaning baths, sinks, basins and shower heads
- Attempting to clear choked wastepipes; bearing full cost of clearance if the choke is caused by lack of care
- Repairing any items installed by themselves or a previous tenant (e.g. additional shower, extra tiles, boxing around basins), unless the Council has accepted responsibility
- Replacing plugs and chains for baths, basins and sinks
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor

Doors and Locks

- Replacing keys or locks when keys are broken, lost or stolen, or when locked out (costs recharged by the Council)
- Adjusting and renewing hinges, catches, latches and handles on internal doors
- Replacing door chains, house numbers and doorbells (unless originally provided by the Council)
- Maintaining internal doors, including easing when new carpets are fitted
- Providing and maintaining any additional locks and latches
- Replacing, at their own expense, any lock changed without the Council's written permission, and restoring it to the original specification
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor
- Providing extra draught excluders where the door fits reasonably well

Drains and Wastes

- Attempting to clear choked wastepipes; bearing the full cost of clearance if caused by lack of care or unusual items (e.g. nappies, toys)
- Clearing leaves and rubbish from gully grids
- Clearing chokes in their own washing machine or dishwasher outlets

Electrics

- Resetting trip switches and, if necessary, turning off the mains supply
- Replacing electric fuses and plugs, as well as light bulbs, fluorescent tubes and starters (except in communal areas or where the Council has fitted a bulkhead light)
- Ensuring their electricity bill is paid and their meter does not run out
- Testing smoke detectors and replacing batteries in battery-operated smoke detectors
- Repairing their own electrical appliances

Fences and Gates

- Maintaining any dividing fences, walls or hedges, including gates between gardens (whether Council-owned or private)
- Maintaining any additional fencing not originally provided by the Council
- Providing new whirlygigs or fixing whirlygigs in their own garden (not communal areas)
- Replacing pulleys and drying lines
- Maintaining garden paths, other than those leading to the main doors
- Maintaining any garden, drying area or outbuilding assigned to their tenancy in a clean and tidy condition
- Keeping all paths within their tenancy clear of weeds, moss and ice
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor

Day-to-Day Maintenance

- Replacing tap washers
- Replacing toilet seats
- Keeping sinks, baths, toilets and drains clear of blockages caused by hair, grease, wipes or other materials
- Bleeding radiators to maintain heating efficiency

- Keeping the property adequately heated and ventilated to prevent condensation and mould growth
- Cleaning windows, both inside and outside

Floors and Stairs

- Repairing or renewing floor coverings, including laminate flooring
- Laying floor coverings such as carpets, lino or vinyl on top of the Council's sub-floor
- Removing any floor covering when repair work is needed to the floor itself
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor

Garages and Sheds

- Repairing any greenhouses, pigeon lofts, sheds, outbuildings or garages not originally provided by the Council
- Maintaining driveways, unless they form part of the pedestrian access to the property
- Replacing keys or locks to garage doors when keys are lost or stolen
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor

Gutters

- Clearing leaves and rubbish from gullies
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor

Heating

- Checking that heating controls (room thermostat, timer or programmer) are set correctly
- Providing access to allow the Council to service the heating system
- Replacing damaged ashpans, fire tools or fire surround tiles
- Re-lighting pilot lights
- Paying their fuel bills
- Never attempting to carry out or organise their own repairs to the gas heating system
- Ensuring all air vents are kept clear from obstructions

Kitchen Fittings

- Installing washing machines, dishwashers and tumble driers, including the wastes and supply pipes
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor
- Adjusting and renewing hinges, catches, latches and handles on cupboard doors
- Repairing any extra kitchen units they have installed themselves
- Putting up, removing or replacing shelves, rails or hooks

Pipes and Taps

- Taking steps to prevent water in pipes and taps from freezing
- Turning off the water supply at the stoptap if a water pipe has burst, and turning on all taps to drain the system
- Installing and maintaining washing machines, tumble driers and dishwashers, including wastes, vents and supply pipes
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor

Roofs and Chimneys

- Putting up and maintaining television and radio aerials or satellite dishes outside the property (written permission must be obtained from the Council first)
- Getting chimneys swept regularly — at least twice a year — where solid fuel (wood or coal) is used
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor

Toilets

- Cleaning toilet pans
- Attempting to clear choked toilets; bearing the full cost of clearance if the choke is caused by lack of care or unusual items (e.g. nappies, toys)
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor

Walls and Ceilings

- Decorating walls and ceilings inside the home
- Repairing minor damage, cracks and holes in walls and ceilings
- Putting up and maintaining television or radio aerials or satellite dishes on the outside of the property (written permission required)
- Putting up, removing or replacing shelves, rails or hooks
- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor

Windows

- Repairing any damage caused by themselves, a member of their family or a visitor
- Replacing broken or cracked glass
- Looking after any plastic windows and doors in accordance with the instructions provided

Pest Control

- Keeping the property clean and disposing of rubbish and food waste properly to avoid attracting pests
- Reporting any signs of pest infestation to the Council promptly
- Taking reasonable steps to prevent re-infestation after treatment (e.g. sealing food, clearing clutter, maintaining cleanliness)
- Booking a pest control visit by calling the Service Centre or visiting their local office
- Paying for any pest treatment where the infestation has been caused by their own actions, lack of care, or failure to maintain adequate hygiene
- Not attempting to deal with bats; contacting Scottish Natural Heritage as bats are a protected species
- Maintaining any greenhouses, sheds or outbuildings in a clean and tidy condition to prevent pest harbourage

Insurance and Contents

- Taking out household contents insurance to protect their own possessions, carpets, fittings and internal decorations
- Being responsible for any accidental damage to their own possessions, carpets and fittings (unless caused by Council contractor negligence)

3. Shared Responsibilities

The following areas involve obligations on both the Council and the tenant. Both parties must act to fulfil their respective duties.

Gas Safety

- **Council responsibility:** carrying out an annual gas safety check in every property with a gas supply
- **Tenant responsibility:** allowing the Council access to the home to carry out the annual gas safety check
- **Tenant responsibility:** informing the Council if an annual gas safety check has not been carried out within the previous 12 months
- **Tenant responsibility:** never attempting to carry out or organise their own repairs to the gas heating system
- **Tenant responsibility:** ensuring all air vents are always kept clear from obstructions

Access for Repairs

- **Council responsibility:** giving reasonable notice of contractor visits and providing a repair reference number
- **Tenant responsibility:** ensuring access is provided for scheduled repair visits; failure to provide access may result in the repair being cancelled and having to be re-reported

- **Tenant responsibility:** ensuring the area where the contractor will work is clear of furniture, children and pets
- **Tenant responsibility:** moving furniture, carpets and electrical equipment before work commences (contractors may assist but accept no responsibility for damage caused)
- **Tenant responsibility:** not leaving a contractor alone with only children under 16 present

DIY and Improvements

- **Tenant responsibility:** always requesting written permission from the Council before carrying out any DIY or improvement works
- **Council responsibility:** not unreasonably refusing permission for alterations or improvements, and informing the tenant whether compensation may be payable upon leaving the tenancy
- **Tenant responsibility:** ensuring any approved alterations or improvements are carried out to a good standard

Reporting Damage and Vandalism

- **Tenant responsibility:** reporting criminal damage or vandalism to the Police at the time of the incident
- **Council responsibility:** taking a Police report into consideration when deciding whether to recharge a tenant for repair costs arising from vandalism or break-in damage