

# 8. What must you do?

The following section explains your responsibilities to your home, if you have any questions as to whether it is your responsibility to undertake a repair please contact us.

## You must:

- Let us into your home to carry out repairs, safety checks and any inspections that are needed
- Keep the inside of your home in a clean and reasonable condition
- Decorate the inside of your home to a reasonable standard, including filling minor cracks or holes in walls
- Let us know as soon as you notice a repair is needed and take action to prevent it getting worse
- Take care in what you are putting down drains and toilets to ensure that blockages do not occur
- Repair and maintain any fixture, fitting or appliance you have put in
- Take action to prevent condensation (see **Handy hints**)
- Arrange the repair of any damage caused by you, a member of your family or a visitor to your home
- Look after your garden, clear away rubbish from your home and garden using your dustbin or other local services
- You **MUST NOT** store any flammable substances or gas in your property
- You **MUST NOT** put rubbish, prams, bikes or any other items that could cause an obstruction in communal stairwells.

Remember if you do not fulfil your responsibilities then you may be recharged for the reinstatement of the property when you vacate it.

## Damage and charging

If you, or anyone in your home, damage your home, we expect you to arrange for it to be repaired to the same standard as it was before. If we have to do it to make sure you and your family are safe, we will charge you for the full cost of the repair.

If damage is caused by a break-in or vandalism, we will carry out work to make your home safe. We will only do further work if you give us a police crime reference number.

## Your rights to repair and improve

You may make most repairs and improvements to your home at your own expense as long as you get written permission from us first. We usually give permission.

Sometimes work affecting your home may also need planning permission and building regulation approval before work starts, so please discuss your plans with us first.

You will have to pay for the work yourself and it must be done to a proper standard. We will need to inspect it when the job is completed so please tell us when it is finished. Please note that we are not responsible for repairs which are necessary due to substandard workmanship or defective materials and you may be recharged for any work necessary to correct these.



## Changes you have made

You can carry out changes to your home as long as you get our written permission before you start. This includes work such as adding gas or electrical fittings and laminate flooring.

You will be responsible for any repairs to the changes you make.

## Insuring your home

If something happens to your home we will repair the physical damage to the property but we cannot replace your belongings. You should arrange your own insurance to cover this. To help, we have a low cost insurance scheme available for our tenants to join. If you would like more information please call our Housing Management Section on **01727 819301** or ask for a leaflet at the Civic Centre.

Please note that if you fit laminate flooring to your property, this will not be covered by the Council's building insurance, so you must ensure it is covered under your contents insurance. You should tell your insurer.

## Tasks you must do

The following pages explain what repairs you are expected to undertake, or arrange to get the work done at your own cost.

A general list follows, along with more specific details on any particular responsibilities you may have as a tenant in respect to undertaking repairs.

# Baths, basins and sinks

## Your responsibilities

- Try to clear blocked baths, basins, sinks (see **Handy hints**)
- Replace plugs and chains to baths, basins and sinks
- Repair any items you have installed yourself
- Replacement of showers with baths where installed.

## Advice

- For water leaks, blockages or tap problems, see the sections Drains and wastes and Pipes and taps
- A blocked waste pipe is not an emergency. You must try to clear any blockages yourself before you call us (see **Handy hints**)
- Do not use the bath or sink if the waste pipe is blocked. We will charge you for the cost of clearing blockages caused by items such as cooking fat, grease, hair
- If you caused the damage, we expect you to get it repaired yourself
- If we need to replace bathroom fittings that are part of a suite, we will try to find a colour match, but if we can't, we will provide it in white.

## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, are bathroom fittings loose or broken; is the waste pipe leaking or blocked; or are the wall tiles cracked or broken?
- If you are reporting a problem with a bath panel, is it the side or the end? Is it made of plastic or hardboard? What colour is it?
- If you are reporting a problem with a bath or basin, what is it made of (plastic, metal or ceramic)? What colour is it?
- If your problem is to do with tiles, what shape, size and colour are they?

# Doors and locks

## Your responsibilities

- Replace keys and locks when keys are lost or broken, or you get locked out
- Get extra keys cut and fit any extra locks
- Replace broken or cracked glass
- Re-secure loose handles and catches on any doors
- Repair or replace catches, handles, locks or bolts on doors inside.
- Adjust doors when you have new carpets fitted
- Fit draught proofing to doors if necessary.

## Advice

- If you caused the damage, we expect you to get it repaired yourself
- For emergency repairs we may only make the property safe and secure and then do a full repair at a later date
- If a problem is caused by vandalism or a break-in, you should report it to the police and get a crime reference number.
- If you lock yourself out of your property, the council do not have keys and you'll have to arrange for your own locksmith to gain entry and change the lock as necessary.



## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, is the lock stiff or does it not fit properly into the keep; is the lock or handle broken, is the door sticking or not closing properly or is it damaged? Is the property still secure?
- Which door is it (front, back or side, or a sliding patio door)? Is it a shared door? What type of lock or latch has it got?
- What is it made of (wood, plastic or metal)?
- What type of lock is it (mortice, cylinder mortice, cylinder rim night latch (Yale or Union), rim lock, or multi-point)?

# Drains and wastes

## Your responsibilities

- Keep drains and waste pipes clear and try to clear blocked baths, basins, sinks or toilets
- Keep gully grids clear of leaves, rubbish and so on (except in shared areas)
- Clear blockages or repair leaks from your washing machine or dishwasher.

## Advice

- A blocked waste is not an emergency. We expect you to try to clear it yourself (see Handy hints)
- A blocked toilet is not an emergency unless you have no other toilet
- If a blockage is caused by items such as nappies, air fresheners, tampons, sanitary towels, cooking fat or hair we will charge you for the cost of clearing it. Always try to clear it yourself
- If you install a washing machine, dishwasher or tumble drier, you are responsible for any water supply, waste or vent connections that you have fitted to them and for clearing any blockages.



## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, is the waste pipe blocked or leaking; is the drain smelling or blocked; or is the gully blocked or the grid missing?

- If you are reporting a problem with a waste pipe, which is it (bath, basin, sink, shower or toilet)?
- If a waste pipe is blocked, is more than one fitting blocked, or if you live in a block of flats, are any other flats affected?
- If the drain is blocked, is it overflowing?
- If you are reporting a problem with a gully grid, is it round or square?
- What is it made of (metal, plastic or ceramic)?



# Electrics

## Your responsibilities

- Reset trip switches and, if necessary, turn off the mains supply (see **Handy hints**)
- Replace light bulbs, fluorescent tubes and starters
- Replace electrical plugs (not socket outlets) and plug fuses for your own appliances
- Test and clean smoke detectors, and replace batteries in battery-operated detectors (see **Handy hints**).



## Advice

- **Do not touch** bare wires and **do not touch** sockets or switches with wet hands
- **Do not** install down lighters in your property as you may be charged for their removal and reinstatement of the ceiling
- **If water is leaking** onto electrical fittings or a fitting is dangerous, do not touch any switches connected to it and contact us immediately
- Make sure that you know where the trip switches are in your home and understand how to reset them (see Handy hints)
- If you caused any damage or you call us out when you have not fed your meter, we will charge you for calling out a repair worker and for the cost of any repair work we do
- If you have a pre-payment meter, please check to ensure there is credit available if there is no electric in your property.

## **What we need to know**

- What is the problem? For example, are there no lights or power in part of, or throughout the property; is a light or light switch not working; or is a socket loose or broken?
- What type of fitting or socket is it?
- Are other homes in your block or nearby buildings affected?
- Is the problem related to any other problems?

# Floors and stairs

## Your responsibilities

- Repair or replace any floor covering (vinyl, carpets or laminate)
- Adjust doors when you have had carpets fitted
- Lift and replace floor coverings if we need to access beneath it to undertake repairs. This includes laminate flooring. However, we are not responsible for replacement.

## Advice

- We will not accept responsibility for damage to your carpets or other floor coverings, unless it is caused by carelessness of people working for us
- If we or the contractor tell you that you need to lift your floor covering (including laminate flooring), you should do this before the workers arrive
- If you lay carpets you should use carpet grippers, not glue. This makes it easier for you to lift the carpets for repairs without damaging them
- If we have to replace floor tiles, we will try to match the colour but this is often not possible
- If you caused the damage, we expect you to get it repaired yourself.



## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, is the floorboard or skirting loose or damaged; is the tread or riser broken; is the handrail loose or broken; or is the floor covering lifting or damaged? Is it in a shared area?
- What is the floor made of? For example, floorboards, chipboard or concrete? What type of floor covering is it? For example, stone tiles, plastic tiles or sheeting, or non-slip flooring because you have a disability?
- How many boards, panels or tiles are affected?
- If the problem is with the stair nosing, is it on shared stairs?
- If so, is the nosing metal or plastic?

# Garages

## Your responsibilities

- Replace keys or locks to garages when the keys are lost or broken
- Repair any damage caused by you, a member of your family or a visitor to your home.

Please note that if you rent a garage it **MUST** only be used for a vehicle and **NOT** for storage.

## Advice

- If a problem is caused by vandalism or a break-in, you should report it to the police and get a crime reference number; otherwise we will charge you for the repair
- If you caused the damage, we expect you to get it repaired yourself
- If your garage is separate from your home, you need to explain how we can find it and get in
- If you cannot lock your garage, you are responsible for the security of anything left inside.

## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, is the garage door jammed; is the frame damaged; or is the roof damaged?
- If you are reporting a problem with a garage, what type of door is it (up-and-over or side-hung)? Is the car stuck inside?
- If you are reporting a problem with a garage roof, what type is it (tiled, metal or plastic corrugated panels, or flat)?

# Gardens

## Your responsibilities

- Remove leaves and rubbish from gullies
- Maintain general garden paths
- Maintain your garden including grass cutting, trees, hedges etc.
- Maintain garden features such as ornamental walls
- Replace keys or locks to shed doors when they are lost or broken
- Replace clothes lines and rotary driers, except in shared areas
- Repair any damage caused by you, a member of your family or a visitor to your home
- Maintain fences and gates unless they are communal fencing and gates.



## Advice

- If a problem is caused by vandalism or a break-in, you should report it to the police and get a crime reference number; otherwise we will charge you for the repair
- If you caused the damage, we expect you to get it repaired yourself.

## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, is the fence loose or broken; is the gate sticking; is a gate catch missing; or is the path uneven or cracked?

- If you are reporting a problem with a fence, what type is it (wooden panels, chain link or rails)? How much is affected (number of panels or rails)?
- If you are reporting a problem with a gate or post, what type is it (wooden, metal or concrete)?
- If you are reporting a problem with a path, what is it made of (slabs, concrete, tarmac or block paving)?

# Gutters

## Your responsibilities

- Keep gully grids clear of leaves, rubbish and so on (except in shared areas).

## Advice

- We need to put up scaffolding for certain types of repairs to gutters
- In bad weather conditions repair workers cannot work at heights, for example, on ladders, scaffolding or on the roof. This is for their own safety.

## What we need to now

- What is the problem? For example, is the gutter or downpipe loose; is it leaking or blocked; is a bracket, joint or shoe loose or broken?
- Which gutter or downpipe is it (front, back or side)?
- What is the gutter or downpipe made of (metal, plastic, concrete or other material)?
- What shape is it (half-round, square or ogee)? What colour is it?
- If you are reporting a problem with a gully grid, is it round or square?
- What is it made of (metal, plastic or ceramic)?
- How many storeys high is the building?
- Are there any other connected problems?



# Heating

## Your responsibilities

- Check that your heating controls (room thermostat, timer or programmer) are set correctly
- Get your own heaters repaired and serviced by qualified engineers
- Keep your home properly heated and ventilated to prevent condensation and to prevent pipes from bursting during cold weather
- Bleed radiators if there is an airlock.

Please make sure that if you are going away in the winter months that you leave your heating on low to reduce the risk of pipes freezing during severe weather.

## Advice

- **If you suspect a gas leak, phone National Grid (Gas) immediately on 0800 111999 – use a phone outside your home.** (Using a phone inside could spark an explosion.) Turn off the gas at the mains and open windows
- Do not smoke or switch anything electrical on or off until the problem is fixed
- Make sure that your gas supply has not been disconnected because you have not paid your bill or fed the meter. If this happens, you will have to relight the pilot light (for gas) and reset the controls yourself
- If a radiator is leaking or loose because you have been doing redecoration work, we will charge you for the cost of the repair.

## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, is the central heating not working; is there no hot water; is a radiator leaking or not getting warm?
- What type of system is it (gas or electric)? Is it a wall-mounted boiler, separate gas fire, or storage or convector heater?
- Have you any other form of heating or hot water heating, for example, an electric immersion heater or a warm-air system (gas or electric)?
- If you are reporting a problem with a radiator, is it warm at the bottom and cold at the top?



# Internal Fittings

## Your responsibilities

- Install washing machines, dishwashers or tumble driers including the waste pipes, supply pipes and vents (if not already provided)
- Clear any blockages in your washing machine or dishwasher
- Fit curtain rails, blinds and hooks
- Repair or replace catches and handles on kitchen units and other cupboards
- Repair any damage caused by you, a member of your family or a visitor
- The fitting of Gas Bayonet or Final Electrical Connections for cookers and ovens (this will need to be undertaken by an approved professional.)



## Advice

- If you caused any damage, we expect you to get it repaired yourself
- If we have to replace kitchen units or parts of a unit, such as the worktop, drawer or door, we will try to match the colour, but this is often not possible
- If you install a washing machine, dishwasher or tumble drier, you are responsible for any water supply, waste or vent connections that you have fitted to them, and for clearing any blockages.

## **What we need to know**

- What is the problem? For example, is a wall or floor unit loose or damaged; is a worktop loose or broken; is a cupboard door or drawer damaged; or are cupboard hinges or catches broken?
- What type of unit is it (wall or floor)? Is it a tall unit or a corner unit? Is it a single or a double unit?
- If you are reporting a problem with wall tiles, what shape, size and colour are they?
- Are there any other connected problems?

## Pest control

### Your responsibilities

- Pests found within the home, such as, mice, cockroaches, ants or fleas are your responsibility.

However we will deal with an infestation of rats to your home and wasps nests within communal areas to blocks of flats.



### Advice

- Contact Environmental Health on **01727 819440**
- Avoid accumulating rubbish in areas that can attract pests and keep food in airtight containers
- Do not leave food waste in plastic bags in an outside area; always put food waste in a bin with a lid
- Use remedies that you can buy from local DIY/hardware stores e.g. flea and ant powders, insect sprays, mouse traps or poison.

# Pipes and taps

## Your responsibilities

- If a water pipe has burst, turn off your water supply at the stop tap and then turn on all taps to allow the rest of the water to flow out
- Fit supply pipe work for washing machines and dishwashers (if not already provided).

## Advice

- You should know where the stop tap is so you can turn the water off in an emergency. It is normally under the kitchen sink or in the downstairs toilet. Note: It is a good idea to turn it on and off occasionally to check that it is easy to turn off in an emergency
- If water is leaking onto electrical fittings, do not touch them. Turn off the electricity supply to those fittings by turning off the trip switch for that part of the home on the consumer unit. This is called isolating or breaking the circuit (see **Handy hints**)
- If there is damage from water leaking, you may be able to claim on your own contents insurance (see **Home contents insurance** on page 22)
- If you caused any damage, we expect you to get it repaired yourself. If we need to do it you will have to pay the full cost of the repair.

## What we need to know

- What is the problem? for example, is there no water; is a pipe leaking or burst; is the overflow running or broken; or is a tap dripping or faulty?
- If water is leaking into your property, is it coming from the flat above? What is the address? Are there any other connected problems?
- If you are reporting a problem with a tap, what type of tap is it?

# Roofs

## Your responsibilities

- Look after any TV aerial or satellite dish you put up (see Advice below).

## Advice

- We need to put up scaffolding for certain types of roof repairs
- In bad weather conditions, repair workers cannot work at heights, for example, on ladders, scaffolding or on the roof
- If you want to put up a satellite dish, you need to get our permission first. You may also need to apply for planning permission
- We will tell you if an aerial or satellite dish needs to be removed to allow work to be done. You must arrange for it to be taken down and put back up. Our workers will not do this for you
- If you caused the damage, we expect you to get it repaired yourself.

## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, is the roof leaking; are tiles or slates loose or broken; has the chimney pot or cowl fallen or is it loose; or is the chimney stack crumbling?
- What type of roof covering is it (slate, tiles, corrugated sheeting, felting or asphalt on a flat roof)?
- If you are reporting a problem with the tiles, what type are they (flat, ridge, interlocking or hip)?
- How many storeys high is the property?
- Is the roof leaking?
- Is the chimney stack shared with another property? What is their address?

# Toilets

## Your responsibilities

- Repair or replace toilet seats and lids, and clean toilet pans
- Try to clear blocked toilets (see **Handy hints**)
- Repair any damage caused by you, a member of your family or a visitor to your home.

## Advice

- A blocked toilet is not an emergency unless you have no other toilet
- You should always try to clear any blockages (see **Handy hints**)
- If a blockage is caused by items such as nappies, air fresheners, condoms, sanitary towels, tampons and so on, we will charge you for the cost of clearing it
- If you caused the damage, we expect you to get it repaired yourself
- If we need to replace a toilet which is part of an existing suite, we will try to find a colour match, but if we can't find a match, we will provide it in white.

## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, is the toilet blocked; is the overflow running; is the cistern leaking; is the seat broken; has the pan cracked or is it leaking; is the flush handle or chain broken; or is water constantly trickling into the pan?
- What type of cistern is it (high-level or low-level)? If low-level, is the flush panel close-coupled or standard?
- What type of handle is it (lever handle, push-down knob or chain)? If it is a push-down knob, is it a dual-flush type?
- What colour is the suite?
- If a toilet is blocked in a flat, are any other flats affected?



# Walls and ceilings

## Your responsibilities

- Fill minor cracks and holes in walls and ceilings
- Keep air vents clear and use extractor fans (where provided)
- Fit curtain rails, blinds, and hat or coat hooks.

## Advice

- Try to keep condensation to a minimum to prevent damp and mould appearing on the walls or ceiling (see **Handy hints** on page 62)
- If you, a member of your family or a visitor caused damage, we expect you to get it repaired yourself. If damage is caused by water leaking, you may be able to make a claim on your own home contents insurance (see **Home contents insurance** on page 22).

## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, is wall plaster loose or crumbling; is ceiling plaster bulging; or is there condensation or mould on the walls?
- Is there any damage caused by water leaking from a pipe or radiator, or through the roof?
- If the problem is outside, what type of wall surface is it (bricks, render, plastic or wooden cladding boards, or hanging tiles)?
- If you are reporting a problem with cladding boards or fascia (outside), what are they made of (wood or plastic)?
- If you are reporting a problem with wall tiles (inside), what shape, size and colour are they?
- If you are reporting a problem with a wall, what is it made of (bricks or concrete blocks)?

# Windows

## Your responsibilities

- Replace broken or cracked glass
- Clean window vents and extractor fan vents (see Advice below)
- Keep window trickle vents clear and use them
- Repair any damage caused by you, a member of your family or a visitor
- Fit draught proofing to windows if necessary.

## Advice

- Look after the metal parts of your windows. Use a soft brush to clear away grit and dust then spray them with a silica wax furniture spray to keep them working smoothly. Do not use oil
- Wipe away any condensation puddles that form on cills
- To clean extractor fan vents, use a dry cloth or a vacuum cleaner with the brush or nozzle attachment.

## What we need to know

- What is the problem? For example, is the glass cracked or broken; are frames loose or jammed; is the stay or fastener broken?
- What type of frame is it (wooden, plastic or metal)?
- What style of window is it (casement, pivot or sliding sash)?
- What type of glass is it (plain, obscure, or wired)? Is it double glazed?
- If a fastener, what type is it?
- Can you shut the window? Are there any other connected problems?

## Repairs responsibility summary

It is important to remember that any improvements that you have made to your home have to be maintained and repaired by you.

### Who is responsible?

	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Bannisters	✓		
Baths	✓		
Bayonet fixings for cookers		✓	
Brickwork	✓		
Carbon monoxide detectors	✓		If supplied by Council
Chimneys	✓		
Chimney sweeping	✓		
Communal (shared) areas of flats	✓		This work may be rechargeable to leaseholders
Cooker point		✓	Tenant responsible for bayonet fitting and flexible hose to cooker
Central heating	✓		
Doors (internal and external)	✓		Except when damaged by tenant use
Door bell	✓		
Door latch	✓		

	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Door locks external	✓		Tenants are responsible for lock changes if they are locked out
Door numbers	✓		
Drains	✓		Unless blockage has been caused by inappropriate disposals such as nappies, food waste and fat, sanitary products, whereby you will be recharged
Drives		✓	
Electric heating	✓		
Fascia boards and soffits	✓		
Fencing (front)		✓	
Fencing (rear)		✓	Unless the garden fencing separates your garden from public footpaths, open spaces and non residential buildings. (In which case we may install chainlink fencing). We will mark the boundary between Council and private dwellings where the responsibility for the fence is with you
Fire grates and surround	✓		We do not open out fireplaces or install hearths
Floorboards	✓		
Floor coverings		✓	Includes vinyl, carpets and laminates

	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Fuses		✓	
Fuse main	✓		
Gates		✓	
Garages	✓		
Gardens		✓	Except communal gardens, retirement schemes
Gas fire renewal		✓	
Glazing		✓	
Guttering	✓		
Handrails	✓		Have to be referred to us by Social Services
Hot water cylinder jackets	✓		
Internal door locks		✓	
Immersion heater	✓		
Kitchens	✓		
Kitchen appliances		✓	
Light fittings		✓	Tenants are responsible for changing any light bulbs or starter motors in lights. If Tenants install their own light fittings and bayonet's they will be responsible for them

	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Loss of keys		✓	In retirement accommodation it is not possible to obtain a new key yourself. We will arrange to have a new key cut, but you will need to pay for this
Outbuildings (permanent)	✓		
Painting (outside)	✓		
Painting (inside)		✓	Redecoration following a leak will be your responsibility and should be covered by your household insurance in the event of an accident
Path to back door and permanent outbuildings	✓		
Path to front door	✓		
Path to garden		✓	
Plastering	✓		
Plumbing repairs and leaks	✓		Rechargeable if due to damage or neglect
Porches	✓		
Taps	✓		Unless fitted by tenant
Roof tiles	✓		

	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Shelving		✓	
Shower		✓	Unless fitted by us
Sink units	✓		
Skirting boards	✓		
Smoke detectors	✓		If mains operated and installed by Council
Squirrel damage	✓		Making good damage/communal areas
Stairs	✓		
Switches and sockets	✓		Additional sockets may be recharged
Tiling		✓	As a tenant you are responsible for maintaining any tiled surfaces to your property along with the decorations
Toilet pan	✓		
Toilet seats		✓	For elderly and registered disabled
TV aerials and sockets (not communal)		✓	All houses, maisonettes and bungalows
TV aerials and sockets (communal)	✓		Only on blocks of flats with a communal entrance. This is not relevant for houses, bungalows and maisonettes
Washing lines (individual)		✓	

	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Washing lines (shared)	✓		
Wasps nests	✓		Communal areas/flats only
Water butts		✓	
Worktops	✓		Unless fitted by tenant or unless damage is caused by misuse
Wiring	✓		



# 9. Planned improvements

In certain cases when you move, the Council can pay you back some of the costs of these improvements if these have made your home more valuable. Please ask at Customer Services Centre for details or telephone **01727 819256** for a leaflet.

In order to maintain your home, we carry out an ongoing programme of maintenance work.

This is undertaken by the Project Group in Housing Services on **01727 819489**.

## The type of work includes

- Cavity wall insulation
- External wall insulation
- Window replacement
- Re-roofing
- Door entry system installation
- Kitchen and bathroom modernisation
- Gas servicing
- Boiler replacement
- Lift servicing.

Projects are identified from inspections carried out by housing surveyors and from surveys completed by the Project Group. A Stock Condition Survey has identified work which needs to be carried out over the next 30 years to maintain properties in a good condition.