



Housing Service

Repair and Maintenance

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Repair and Maintenance Responsibilities

Responsibility for repairs to Council houses is shared between the Council and its tenants.

The word 'repair' includes any work necessary to put the house into a state which is wind and watertight, habitable and in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation.

The Tenants Handbook which is available online details within chapters 7 and 8 the repairs and maintenance responsibility for both tenants and Council.

<https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/download/153/sic-tenant-handbook>

The Council has the right to enter a house to inspect it and its fixtures and fittings, or carry out repairs to it, or adjoining property, during reasonable times of the day. The Council will give at least 24 hours' notice in writing.

Where a repair is carried out for a reason other than fair wear and tear the tenant is normally to be recharged. Where vandalism or malicious damage has occurred, provided that the incident has been reported to the police, the crime / incident number should be recorded on the works order notes.

Listed below are actions where the cost of the repair works will be charged to the tenant in accordance with the Recharge Policy. This list is not a definitive list. The Housing Service may identify other repair works they deem rechargeable. In these circumstances full details are to be passed to the Team Leader – Asset Services for clarification. If the repairs are deemed to be rechargeable a letter will be issued to the tenant confirming and explaining the recharge.

- Any repair costs that result from pets including removal of cat flaps must be recharged to the tenant.
- Any repair costs associated with gaining entry or replacing keys and / or locks is to be recharged to the tenant.
- Any repair costs associated with unblocking drains that can be attributed to a particular household are to be recharged to the tenant.
- Any repair costs associated with tenants own electrical fittings are to be recharged to the tenant.
- Any repair costs associated with use of the emergency service that is exaggerated or mis-stated are to be recharged to the tenant.

There may be cases where responsibility for the repair is not known until after the work is carried out, for example an electrical fault reported, but turns out to be a faulty appliance. In these circumstances the Inspection Officer dealing with the repair may use discretion and not recharge for the first occurrence. However, when this discretion is exercised a letter of confirmation and explanation is to be sent to the tenant in all cases.

Repair Priorities

All repairs are given a repairs priority to help housing staff, tenant and contractors to have a shared understanding of when work needs to be done.

The following schedule of codes is intended to ensure that repairs are attended to in a timely manner as well as improving costs effectiveness through batched, non-urgent works. Categories are also in line with legislation under [Right to Repair](#) and Shetland Islands Council policy. Please see <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/housing/housing-repairs-maintenance> for further information.

Repairs priorities currently used by the Housing Service are:

Emergency (E), Completed within 24 hours. Examples would be leaking pipes, no hot water, no electricity

Urgent (U), completed within 3 working days. Examples would be lock repairs, leaking windows

Routine (R), completed within 20 working days. Examples would be to replace kitchen cupboards, gates or slipped tiles.

3 Month (3M), completed within 3 calendar months. Examples would be replumb a property or install a level access shower.

6 Month (6M), completed within 6 calendar months. Examples would be replace faulty Double Glazing units.

Void Essential (VE), completed within 5 working days. An example would be an electrical test. Repairs ordered with this priority are required to make the property habitable, ie repairs must be completed before a tenant can move in due to health & safety reasons.

Void 2 Week (V2), completed within 14 working days. This priority is chosen when more extensive works are required which cannot be completed within a week. Repairs ordered with this priority are required to make the property habitable, ie repairs must be completed before a tenant can move in due to health & safety reasons.

Void 4 Week (V4), completed within 28 days. This priority is chosen when more extensive works are required which cannot be completed within 2 weeks. Repairs ordered with this priority are required to make the property habitable, ie repairs must be completed before a tenant can move in due to health & safety reasons.

Social Work Adaptations (SWP5), completed within 5 working days for minor social work adaptations. An example would be urgent handrails required. This priority is only to be used for social work adaptations that are to be completed within one week as recommended by an Occupational Therapist, ie handrails, grabrails, key safes etc.

For Major social work adaptations, other priorities as detailed above may also be used, which are determined by a number of factors including external contractor availability, design input and obtaining statutory consents.

Out of Hours

Emergency repairs are reported outwith normal working times and responded to within 4 hours. These repairs are ordered the next working day after the repair has been reported.

Void Repairs

Please refer to the [Void Policy](#) for repair and maintenance responsibilities for void properties.

Right to Repair Scheme

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Scottish secure tenants have the Right to Repair to have small urgent repairs carried out by the Housing Service within a given timescale. The following Scottish Government website explains the details of the scheme:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/right-repair/>

Shetland Islands Council provides a leaflet online to explain the detail of the Right to Repair Scheme:

<https://www.shetland.gov.uk/housing/housing-repairs-maintenance.>

The online Tenant Handbook also provides detail of the Right to Repair within section 7.7 - Right to Repair:

<https://www.shetland.gov.uk/downloads/download/153/sic-tenant-handbook>

Common Repairs

Recharges can be raised against any owner occupier for recovery of costs to the Housing Service for repairs that are to be shared. Similarly the owner occupier can ask that the Housing Service share the cost of any common repairs that the Council has agreed to in the deeds to the sold property.

If a request for a common repair is made to the Housing Service, details are to be passed to the Team Leader, Asset Services for approval. Shared payment is not to be made unless the need for the repair is validated as necessary and recorded as such on the house file. Any shared contribution by the Housing Service is to be subject to a satisfactory inspection and completion in a professional manner using quality material.

Before authorising any shared payments Housing Service is to satisfy themselves that the work cannot be done cheaper by our own contractors. The work may still be organised by the owner occupier if this cost is exceeded, but any payment will be limited to the cost expected from our own contractors. In cases where the owner occupier admits causing the damage, written acceptance / confirmation is to be obtained before proceeding with a recharge.

Recharges for common repairs should be carried out in line with the [Recharge Policy](#).

Accurate records and file notes should be kept of all conversations and visits with the owner occupiers involved. If any queries are raised after the invoice has been sent these should be dealt with by the Inspection Officer or referred to the Team Leader, Asset Services.

Administration cost of 10% will be charged by Shetland Islands Council for all projects where the Council has engaged officers and administration staff to administrate over works.

Fencing and Walls

The tenant is responsible for maintaining and repairing divisional fencing. All divisional fences will be maintained to a stock proof standard.

The Housing Service will be responsible for maintaining their share of divisional fences for temporary and sheltered accommodation.

The Housing Service will repair and maintain all boundaries. A boundary is defined as one, which separates the Council property from a road, footpath, public area, field or large non-domestic property.

Fence Standard

Where boundary fences are next to pavements or communal foot paths, fences will be timber slatted, unless otherwise specified relevant to the nature of the scheme.

Where the back boundary is next to open ground i.e. fields or open areas in a scheme, fences will be post and wire.

All divisional fencing between tenants or owner occupiers will be post and wire.

Any request from a private owner to repair or contribute to repair of a divisional or boundary fence / wall must be treated as individual cases. The feu disposition is to be checked in all cases and costs apportioned accordingly if appropriate.

If the Housing Service has an obligation to share the cost with an owner-occupier the contribution or ordering of the work is to be in accordance with our [Common Repairs](#) policy.

Any fencing/walls replaced by the Housing Service as part of an environmental scheme is to be paid for by the Housing Service. Once installation is completed and outside of any defects liability period the repair responsibility is to be dealt with as for existing fences/walls.

In the event of any situation that does not fall readily within these guidelines, the Team Leader – Asset Services is to be contacted for advice on how to proceed.

Garden Maintenance Procedure

A garden can be regarded as not being maintained where there is a build-up of rubbish, where items not typically found within a garden have been discarded or where the grass has been left for a period of 4 weeks without being cut between the months of March to October.

In all cases a record of the complaint should be kept or a file note of the external inspection should be completed and filed in the house file.

The Housing Service will undertake a site inspection following the passing of the deadline date. If the tenant does not carry out the works by the agreed date a further letter will be issued to the tenant allowing a final opportunity to complete or make arrangements to have the works undertaken within a 14 day period. This letter will provide a further deadline date and confirm that should the works not be complete the Housing Service will undertake the works and recharge the tenant in accordance with the [Recharges Policy](#).

The Housing Service will carry out a final inspection following the passing of the deadline date. If the tenant fails to carry out or make arrangements to have the works carried out by the stated deadline date the Housing Service will make arrangements to undertake the works and recharge the tenant in accordance with the [Recharges Policy](#).

Following the completion of the remedial works the Housing Service will pass inform the Finance Section of all associated costs for invoicing.

On termination of tenancy the condition of the garden should be noted and the outgoing tenant reminded of their obligations. If the garden is still untidy at the time of termination, the garden should be brought to an acceptable standard by the Housing Service. The cost will be recharged to the outgoing tenant in accordance with [Recharges Policy](#).

Parties agreeing to a mutual exchange should be advised that the gardens are accepted “as seen”, and you are responsible for future maintenance. The Housing Service cannot be responsible for the condition now or in the future.

Grass Cutting

Void Properties

Grass cutting to these properties will be organised and carried out at the discretion of the Housing Service.

Birds Nests

Birds’ nests reported to the Housing Service that are found to be on a Housing Service property are to be removed at the expense of the Housing Service. Any order raised should include the fitting of a deterrent to the nest site. The Housing Service will instruct Environmental Services to undertake the works.

In the event of a bird’s nest being built on a chimney shared with an owner occupier, refer to [Common Repairs](#).

The removal of bird nests from chimneys is to be treated as an “urgent” priority.

Double Glazing

Faulty Double Glazing reported to the Housing Repairs Service that are found to be in Living Areas* of a Housing Service property are to be removed and replaced by the Housing Service. The Housing Service will instruct an external contractor to undertake the works.

In the event that a Double Glazing Unit is reported as leaking or broken in a non-living area, works will be undertaken to replace the unit.

The repair of a Double Glazing unit is treated as a “6 Month” priority.

*Living Areas – Kitchen, Living room or an adjoining Dining room

Changing Locks

In normal circumstances it is the tenants' responsibility to ensure the security of their homes. As such responsibility for loss of keys is also the responsibility of the tenant. The Housing Service does not retain any keys for properties that are let.

The tenant is also responsible for any damage caused by those visiting or sharing residence with the named tenant.

If a tenant contacts the Repair Reporting Helpdesk to request that the locks are changed to his or her house, the Helpdesk should advise that this work can be carried out but the expectation is that the tenant will be recharged for the cost.

If the tenant is unable to meet the cost of the recharge, or feels that they have an exceptional reason for requesting the lock change and should not be charged, the Helpdesk should first assess the request and consider whether the work should be recharged or not. For example, exceptions would be a tenant concerned about the risk of domestic abuse, or elderly persons with no near relatives to help.

If the Helpdesk is not sure, they should detail the reason for the request and contact the area Housing Officer (general need properties) or the named Housing Officer (temporary properties) to discuss.

Following this referral if a change of locks with no recharge is recommended by the Housing Officer, the tenant should not be recharged for the lock change.

In the event that the same person repeatedly loses their keys, the matter should be referred to the appropriate Estate Manager – Housing Management for assessment and follow up action.

Unless there are compelling reasons for not suppressing a recharge, the costs should be recovered in accordance with the [Recharges Policy](#).

Condensation

Where condensation issues are identified the tenant will be supplied with information on reducing condensation, mould and dampness. This is available through a leaflet and on the website.

Tenants are advised within the online Tenants Handbook reference 8.14.4 and 13.5 regarding the causes of condensation and the steps a tenant can take to prevent condensation occurring;

[Tenant Handbook](#)

Any mould reported is to result in an order to have the area treated with a mould eradication kit. On no account are these kits to be issued to tenants for their own use. Any such treatment is to be applied by the repair contractor under controlled conditions.

Showers – Social Adaptations

Where there is a shower installed as a result of social adaptations, the incoming tenant should be advised that the property is accepted as seen. Housing Service will not replace a level access shower with a bath.

If the previous tenant installed a shower (either over the bath or free standing) the new tenant is to be offered a chance to take the shower on as their own responsibility, subject to the shower passing the full property electrical test during the void period. If the incoming tenant does not wish to take responsibility for the maintenance of the shower, the shower and associated fittings are to be removed by the DLO and the cost of doing so will be recharged to the outgoing tenant.

Fire Detection

The new law came into force on 1 February 2022 for all homes in Scotland to have interlinked fire alarms. Interlinked means if one goes off, they all go off, so you will always hear an alarm wherever you are in your home. Work is ongoing to ensure all properties comply with this legislation as soon as feasibly possible.

It is the SIC's responsibility for meeting the new standard.

Every home must have:

- one smoke alarm in the living room or the room you use most
- one smoke alarm in every hallway and landing
- one heat alarm in the kitchen

All smoke and heat alarms should be mounted on the ceiling and be interlinked. If you have a carbon-fuelled appliance – like a boiler, fire, heater or flue – in any room, you must also have a carbon monoxide detector in that room, but this does not need to be linked to the fire alarms.

Laminate Flooring

The Housing Service requires tenants to request permission for the alteration or improvement of fixtures and fittings. The Housing Service regards the installation of laminate flooring as an improvement to the properties fittings.

Due to the issue of noise transfer, any request to install laminate flooring in an upper floor flat should be refused.

Clothes Pulleys

The Housing Service does not repair or replace clothes pulleys. If a clothes pulley is defective and the tenant is unable or unwilling to replace it, the pulley should be removed. If a property becomes empty any clothes pulley will be removed.

Coal Bunkers

The Housing Service will be responsible for the repair and maintenance of coal bunkers where the solid fuel heating system is the responsibility of the Housing Service.

When the Housing Service carries out the replacement of a solid fuel heating system the coal bunker will be removed as part of the works.

Discretion may be used in cases where it can be shown that the Council supplied the original item, or it is an integral part of the building.

Damage resulting from chimney fires will be recharged to the tenant if there is clear evidence that lack of sweeping is the likely cause.

Fireplaces and Chimney Sweeping

Where houses have had non-solid fuel heating installed and an open fire is still in operation, the Housing Service will maintain the fireplace, flue and chimney, but will not take responsibility for chimney sweeping as that is a tenant responsibility. If any part of the open fire is beyond economic repair the opening is to be made safe, closed, capped and vented.

If there is a room heater or cooker that would normally be removed and the tenant wishes to keep the item, the tenant is to be informed in writing that they will be responsible for the future repair and maintenance of the appliance, fireplace, flue, chimney, hearth, tiles and associated fittings. A copy of the correspondence is to be placed on the house file and recorded on the Housing Management System. Housing services will continue to maintain the flue for the appliance.

When a property is void and the main heating system is other than solid fuel, any solid fuel appliance should be removed and the wall and floor surface re-instated. Where the chimney head is still in use (e.g. a common chimney) the redundant flue(s) should be capped and vented. Coal bunkers will be removed as part of these works. The Council will sweep active chimneys in void properties prior to letting.

Tenants are advised within the online Tenants Handbook, reference 13.3 regarding their obligation to keep the chimney clean.

[Tenant Handbook](#)

Energy Performance Certificate

Introduction

Due to current legislation all new tenants who rent a property on or after 04 January 2009 must be provided with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

Implementation

The Housing Service on receipt of the letter of termination will check if the property has a current EPC and if not they will inform the Contract Manager (Services) that an EPC is required for the property.

At the time of the full inspection, the Housing Service will install the new certificate on the wall at the side of the electrical meter. If the house is on the system as having

a certificate then the Housing Service will check if it is on display and if not they will have to obtain a copy from the house file and ensure it is displayed in the correct location.

If the EPC for some reason is not with Housing at the time of the full inspection then the Housing Service is responsible to ensure it is obtained and displayed as soon as possible.

The Contract Manager (Services) will be responsible with recording the EPC data on to the Housing Management Service database.