

Repairs policy

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1. Scope

This policy outlines Ealing Council's approach to how we repair the homes we own and manage.

This policy applies to the interior, exterior, and communal areas of the council's general needs housing stock and sheltered accommodation.

Void work (work to empty homes) planned work and improvement work is excluded from this policy.

We do not have any legal obligation to carry out repairs to inside the homes of leaseholders and shared owners, as per the lease agreement, unless a fault to the structure of the building causes internal damage.

Any repairs that are due within the first 12 months of handover on a new-build property will ordinarily be dealt with in line with the defect's procedure. In addition, any components in a new build property that has a warranty will be excluded from this policy.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to provide clarity on Ealing Council's approach provision of an efficient and effective repairs service that maintains the homes we let as a good and safe place to live.

To achieve this, we will:

- be clear about the repair and maintenance responsibilities for the landlord and the tenant
- enable repairs to be reported in several ways, either by telephone, email or through our on-line portal

- organise repair priorities that balances operational needs and tenants' requirements; aiming to deliver a right first-time approach that achieves good value for money
- deliver a consistent and fair service to our tenants
- make best use of performance information to continually improve the service
- ensure that the health and safety of all concerned are at the forefront of what we do

3. Policy statement

A high-quality repairs service is a key element in the provision of good quality rented housing. It is an essential element in achieving high levels of tenant satisfaction, improving the landlord and tenant relationship, and protecting health and safety.

We will always endeavour to keep properties to decent homes standards by taking a planned approach to their maintenance.

We will ensure that all residents have appropriate access to the repairs service and prioritise the needs of vulnerable residents.

We aspire to deliver a 'safety first' culture ensuring that resident and colleague safety and wellbeing always comes first.

We would expect and require residents to report any faults or damage as soon as possible and keep their home and surrounding communal areas in a good and clean condition, in line with their respective tenancy agreement, lease, or license.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all council residents and staff are aware, understand and can deliver the requirements of the repairs service.

4. Our repairs service

Ealing Council has a statutory duty to carry out repairs to our tenants' homes, where we have a repairing liability. It is the responsibility of our tenants to keep their property in a reasonable condition and report repairs immediately via one of Ealing Council's methods of contact. Repairs will be allocated a predefined priority (emergency within 4 hours, urgent within 7 days or routine within 28 days) which reflects its degree of urgency. Our aim is to complete all repairs right first time, with the minimum of disruption.

The responsibility of the tenant to keep a property in reasonable condition is set out in the 'repairs handbook'. That documents also sets out clearly and in detail the repairs that are the responsibility of Ealing Council. Work relating to gas and electricity must be undertaken by Ealing Council.

Ealing Council offers an out-of-hours service, which is available for emergencies only. Under this service, Ealing Council will attend within 4 hours to an emergency repair. An emergency repair is defined in section 5 below.

We will ensure that any planned repairs and maintenance activities align with the objectives of our asset management strategy.

5. Timescales for repairs

We will endeavour to carry out repairs within the agreed time priorities, to a good standard of workmanship using quality materials and undertaken in a safe manner.

Timeframes for response repairs are set out as guidelines in the repairs handbook.

For example:

An emergency repair is any reported repair that puts the health, safety, or security of the customer or third party at immediate risk or adversely affects the structure of the property and will consist of making safe only. It is our intention to attend within 4 hours.

Urgent repairs are repairs that are needed more quickly than routine repairs but are not as immediately dangerous as emergency repairs. These repairs typically need to be addressed within a few working days, often within 2-7 days. Examples of urgent repairs might include issues with water supply, drainage, electricity, or security.

Routine repairs are any other repairs and should be completed within 28 working days, we will prioritise according to resident needs.

We will aim to make appointments for all repairs in each of the above categories except for those relating to communal areas. Appointments will generally be made at the first point of contact with the resident and for a time and date convenient for the resident. We seek to offer flexible and convenient appointments to residents - weekdays in 2-hour appointment slots.

6. Decants

Ealing Council consults closely with residents including homeowners when it is necessary to decant them from their homes to undertake disruptive and intrusive repairs. We will ensure the disruption to their lives and homes is kept to a minimum during this process, and full consideration is given to residents' vulnerabilities and circumstances. Ealing Council will make every reasonable endeavour to ensure that the 'temporary accommodation' is safe,

suitable and meets customer needs.

Homeowners may have a right to secure accommodation through their building insurance policy and in line with the terms of their lease. It is the responsibility of the resident to ensure that they have adequate insurance in place to protect the contents of their home. We do not provide compensation for any contents which may be lost, stolen, damaged or destroyed.

7. Inspections

Pre-inspections maybe required before a repair appointment can be arranged. This will include circumstances where the scope of the repair is difficult to diagnose without a visit. Language line will be used during the pre-inspection where necessary. Following the inspection, the repair will be identified and planned within appropriate timescales. Pre-inspections will be carried out by our repair's surveyors.

Post-inspections will be carried out to ensure Ealing Council are delivering a good-quality repairs service, complex repairs will be post-inspected following completion. Any issues will be discussed with the contractor and referred to them for remedy.

8. Home improvements

Ealing Council will consider giving permission for home improvement works if the title deeds permit. No home improvement works should be undertaken without prior written approval from Ealing Council. We will double check the asbestos register and advise the resident of any asbestos present in their home.

Approved works must be completed to an agreed specification by a competent tradesperson. All elements of asbestos, gas and

electrical work must be carried out by an approved and registered contractor.

The ongoing maintenance responsibility for the home improvement works will become the responsibility of the resident.

9. Chargeable repair work

This policy seeks to set out the principles to recharge the cost of work that is caused by tenant's misuse or neglect. This approach extends to similar damage caused by visitors to the property, for whom the tenant is responsible, and applies to all residents regardless of tenure type.

Ealing Council reserves the right to ask for rechargeable repairs to be paid in full prior to the works being carried out and will allow for this to be paid in instalments. In the event of the damage being discovered upon the termination of a tenancy, Ealing Council reserves the right to request payment in the notice period prior to termination or seek repayment following termination. At all stages in the tenancy termination process, residents will be encouraged to repair willful neglect or damage to the property prior to recharge being placed on the customer's account.

In the event of the charge failing to be recovered, it will be held indefinitely against the tenant's rent account and taken into consideration should a further tenancy be applied for. It should be noted that failure to comply with rechargeable repairs, either in tenancy or at the termination point, could lead to a refusal for housing in the future.

We will make a charge for damage caused by vandalism; criminal activity (including domestic abuse); access gained by the police; fire damage and flooding. In exceptional circumstances we may agree

to waive the charge.

Chargeable works include damage to individual homes owned by Ealing Council and communal or community areas of a building or estate. These can also be applied to residents after they have terminated their tenancy.

10. Managing risks

This policy helps us manage the risk of failure to meet the Regulator of Social Housing's Safety and Quality Standard. This policy is the first line of defence.

We will continuously monitor and review our performance against our KPIs to measure how effectively we are delivering the repairs service to our residents. We review our resident satisfaction levels to help us understand any risks we may be exposed to, so we can mitigate and review our policies and procedures.

We will undertake analysis and review disrepair cases. We will review the learning from our complaints, including any determinations received from the Housing Ombudsman Service to understand any trends or exposure to risk within the repairs service.

We will carry out effective contractor monitoring and meet with our contractors monthly to manage any current or emerging risks, within our agreed governance structure.

We will update our risk register monthly to review and record any changes to the existing risks associated with the repairs service and to capture new or emerging risks.

11. Resident engagement

Ealing Council commits to notify residents of all appropriate repairs and maintenance information on a regular basis. This includes:

- signage
- newsletters
- resident group meetings
- electronic media boards
- the Ealing Council website
- new tenant sign up packs
- Repairs and Asset Management Panel (RAMPs)

It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list.

Communication is tailored to the protected characteristics of our residents, including the age, ethnicity, and religion of the individual; again, this is not an exhaustive list. Ealing Council recognises our vulnerable residents and promotes equality of opportunity through tailoring services and accessibility to meet their specific needs.

As a requirement of legislation and good practice, Ealing Council will engage in effective, two-way communication to consult with residents regarding repairs; this is to ensure a customer-focused service delivery, unless under exceptional circumstances the safety of our residents or asset takes precedent. Feedback is analysed, and all customer insight is used to shape and improve our services.

Residents through our RAMPs group have been involved in shaping policy, scrutinizing the service and informing the shape of services.

12. Contractor engagement

Ealing Council will only use contractors that have been specially selected following a robust procurement process to carry out the day-to-day repairs service for our homes.

We have a legal duty to share our asbestos register with our contractors. They are required to refer to our asbestos register before they carry out any repairs in our homes.

Operatives are required to wear shoe coverings whilst they are working in residents' homes.

We will meet with our contractors at least monthly to review performance.

We will not pay for any additional work where the variation order is in excess of £200 and has not been authorised.

In addition, all contractors are required to show evidence of appropriate guidance and training to their staff.

13. Equality and diversity

An equality impact assessment 'initial screening' has been carried out which has shaped the policy.

The council is committed to providing a fair and equitable service to its residents. Through the provision of our repairs service the council aims to treat all residents fairly, with dignity, and with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and marital status.

14. Monitoring and review

The rebuilding the housing service programme board and the rebuilding the housing service executive board will monitor and develop a suite of KPIs using our repairs system that measures:

- % of emergency repairs carried out within 4 hours
(target 100%)
- % of urgent repairs carried out within 7 days
(target 90%)
- % of repairs completed at first visit
(target 85%)
- average number of working days taken to complete routine repairs
(target 15 working days)
- % of routine repairs completed within 28 working days
(target 90%)
- % of recalls within a 6-month period
(target 5%)

This information will be shared with our involved residents, who will also monitor performance.

We continuously monitor our processes and procedures set out in our repairs contract. We intend to use an independent organisation in 2024 to assess satisfaction levels to monitor the resident's experience with the service.

the KPI will be captured in the Housing Performance Management Framework and monitored through our agreed governance structure which is H&E SLT in the first instance (this is BAU rather than programme activity)

The suite of KPIs reported will also include the number and profile of overdue repairs works, as currently reported on the monthly compliance proforma

We will maintain our management systems to ensure the timely and accurate provision of data to enable effective oversight and scrutiny

We will seek to benchmark our performance against comparator organisations as well as monitoring and reporting on contractual compliance

We will proactively address any underperformance to understand root causes, put in place mitigating actions, and agree and report specific targets to bring performance back on track

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years, unless new legislation, advice from the Housing Ombudsman Service or other good practice means it needs to be reviewed sooner.

15. Governance

As a registered social landlord, we have a statutory responsibility to comply with all relevant health, safety, and compliance requirements. The Ealing cabinet and chief executive are responsible for seeking evidenced assurance that all health and safety legislation relating to repairs and maintenance is being adhered to, that the risks associated with works are identified and managed, and that a proper control and assurance framework is in place.

16. Legal framework

- Public Health Act 1963
- Land Compensation Act 1973
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Building Regulations Act 1984
- Housing Act 1985
- Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Electricity at Work Act 1989
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (as amended)
- Housing Act 2004

- Fire Reform Regulations 2005
- Guidance specifically the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- The Regulator of Social Housing – Safety and Quality Standard
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (as amended)
- Construction, Design Management 2015 (as amended)
- Home Standard 2015
- Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 2018 (as amended)
- Fitness for Human Habitation Act 2018
- 18th Edition Institution of Engineering and Technology IET Wiring Regulations 2022
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Decent Home Standard
- HSE Approved Code of Practice Legionnaires' disease 274

17. Associated policies and procedures

- Repairs handbook
- Responsive repairs procedure
- Asbestos policy
- Decant policy
- Lettable standard
- Neighbourhood management policy
- Voids policy

18. Appendix

Equality impact assessment