
REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE & IMPROVEMENTS

1.0 Strategic Links

South Lakeland District Council Housing Strategy 2002 – 2006

To have an accurate understanding of the condition of the housing stock in the District in order to maintain a high standard where existing and raise standards where required.

2.0 Key Objective

The achievement of a high quality repairs and maintenance service in order to protect the value of South Lakes Housing's (SLH's) housing stock and to ensure that the promises and obligations of SLH to its tenants in respect of the accommodation provided to them are satisfactorily achieved.

3.0 Key Policy Standards

3.1 Principles

- Maintain SLH's properties in good condition and to an up-to-date standard.
- Respond to requests for repairs promptly in accordance with published time response standards.
- Carry out repairs efficiently and to a high standard.
- Instigate a programme of improvements to bring all properties up to the Decency Standard and provide tenants with choice, wherever possible.
- Comply with its statutory and contractual obligations to tenants and leaseholders including the terms of the Tenants' Guarantee.
- Extend the useful life of all its properties and reduce long-term maintenance costs.
- Provide a flexible, convenient and customer oriented service that gives priority to the safety, comfort and convenience of occupants.
- Take into account the views of tenants in the preparation of its programmes for improvement and repair and minimise inconvenience to them when work is carried out.
- Provide advice and guidance to tenants wishing to carry out alterations themselves.
- Grant tenants a right to repair (see paragraph 3.5).

3.2 Environmental Impact

SLH will have regard to the impact of its housing on the environment by:-

- embracing the principle of sustainability;
- monitoring the energy efficiency of the housing stock;
- improving the energy efficiency of the housing stock through cost effective use of the repair and improvement programme in order to improve comfort for tenants, lower energy costs and reduce CO₂ emissions;
- choosing, whenever practical, low maintenance and energy efficient materials;
- assessing the visual or other environmental impact of its programmes;
- giving sensitive consideration to the needs of elderly tenants and those with a disability or special needs.

3.3 Best Value and Egan Compliance

SLH will introduce policies and supporting procedures designed to comply with the key principles of the Egan Construction Taskforce - Rethinking Construction and the principles of Best Value.

3.4 Responsibilities of SLH

- SLH is responsible for the maintenance, repair and replacement of items in the following categories:-
- roofs, walls and floors of the dwelling
- windows and external doors (except broken glass) gutters, drain pipes, waste pipes and drains chimneys and flues (but not sweeping chimneys other than gas flues) gas pipes and electrical wiring;
- taps, sinks, basins, baths and wc's, where faults arise from fair wear and tear (but not replacement of plugs and chains);
- kitchen fittings;
- external decorations;
- paths, steps, boundary walls and certain fencing;
- garages.

3.5 Right to Repair

Tenants have a right to expect repairs to be completed within certain timescales. SLH is committed to ensure that its staff and contractors perform to published standards.

If a qualifying repair cannot be completed within an agreed timescale the tenant has the right to request SLH to instruct a second contractor to complete the work. Where the second contractor also fails to complete the work within the agreed time SLH will pay compensation to the tenant.

Qualifying Repairs

| Repair | Period to Complete (working days) |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Total loss of electrical power | 1 |
| Partial loss of electrical power | 3 |
| Unsafe power | 1 |
| Total loss of water supply | 1 |
| Partial loss of water supply | 3 |
| Blocked flue to open fire or boiler | 1 |
| Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 31 October and 1 May | 1 |
| Ditto between 30 April and 1 November..... | 3 |
| Blocked or leaking foul drain or soil stack..... | 1 |
| Toilet not flushing (if no other working toilet)..... | 1 |
| Blocked sink bath or basin..... | 3 |
| Tap which cannot be turned | 3 |
| Leaking from water or heating pipe | 1 |
| Leaking roof | 7 |
| Insecure external window, door or lock..... | 1 |
| Loose or detached banister or handrail | 3 |

Note: work costing over £250 is excluded

Compensation

If the second contractor fails then £10 will be paid. For every extra day of delay a further £2 will be paid up to a maximum of £50.

Limitations

Compensation is not payable if:-

- a satisfactory temporary repair can be effected;
- temporary heating is provided due to heating failure between 31 October and 1 May;
- the tenant fails to allow access;
- SLH cannot effect repairs as the result of the failure of a supply;
- the failure is due to non-payment by the tenant of a supply charge.

3.6 Responsibility of the Tenant

These responsibilities are defined within the tenancy agreement and are subject to review.

In general terms, the tenant is responsible for the maintenance, repair or replacement of the categories set out in the tenancy agreement, except where it arises from fair wear and tear.

The tenant will also be responsible for the repair or replacement of any item in a property damaged due to neglect, carelessness or deliberate action on the part of the tenant and/or their family and/or any individual knowingly allowed into the property, other than fair wear and tear.

SLH reserves the right to carry out the above work itself and may recharge the tenant.

The tenant must tell SLH when a repair needs to be done and allow access in order to qualify for the compensation scheme.

3.7 Response Maintenance

General

SLH will provide a service, which is centred on repairs by appointment. Within the approved priority categories the aim will be to minimise the time between a request for a repair and its completion, unless the repair can be more cost effectively carried out as part of a programme of planned or cyclical works.

Priority Categories

SLH will operate a system of repairs by appointment. Normally an appointment will be made when the repair is requested. If for any reason this is not possible eg an inspection is needed, the repair will be given a timescale. The priorities are set out in the Appendix to this policy.

Ordering Repairs

Tenants may report repairs by any of the following means:-

- by telephone (including fax);
- in person;
- in writing.

Outside normal working hours a telephone facility will be provided for requesting emergency repairs.

Details of contact points and telephone numbers will be supplied to individual tenants and included in the Tenants' Handbook.

A receipt will be sent to tenants to confirm their repair requests. All tenants will be left a customer satisfaction survey to comment on the services provided. All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the Complaints Procedures.

3.8 Empty Properties (Voids)

A separate Service Policy Statement has been developed to cover empty property management.

3.9 Cyclical Maintenance

SLH will implement a programme of cyclical maintenance in respect of:-

- external decorations and associated other repairs on a five year cycle,
- internal common parts decorations on a five year cycle,
- gas system and appliances annually.

In addition SLH will enter into service contracts for inspection, testing, maintenance and repair of:-

- lifts and stair lifts;
- fire alarm installations, fire detection (not battery operated smoke detectors) and fire fighting equipment;
- door entry and warden call equipment;
- communal aerial installations.

SLH will arrange for the proper maintenance and management of hard and soft landscaped areas, including grass cutting.

3.10 Planned Maintenance

Planned maintenance is work carried out on a pre-planned basis to maintain the general condition of property and fittings provided by SLH. These include such items as external painting and annual servicing of heating systems, lifts, etc.

In addition in responding to tenants' wishes SLH will develop a programme of planned maintenance to minimise future maintenance costs and reduce the need for response repairs.

SLH will consider planned maintenance of structural items to properties on a five-year cycle. This will include carrying out an inspection of property condition and attributes to facilitate life cycle costing and future planning.

Inspections will be carried out before external painting is due to assess the condition of roofs, woodwork and windows in order that any necessary repairs or replacements can be undertaken before the painting is done.

The servicing of all lifts, central heating systems and other equipment requiring similar regular maintenance will be carried out on an annual basis, or more frequently if required by manufacturers instructions or good trade practice.

Tenants will be kept informed and consulted about planned maintenance programmes. They will also be given at least 14 days' notice of any such works that are likely to cause them significant disruption.

3.11 Improvements

In addition to response and planned maintenance SLH will endeavour to continue to improve the facilities and amenities available to tenants and bring all properties up to an up-to-date standard.

SLH will take account of tenants wishes and whenever practical provide a choice when any improvement works are to be carried out on an elemental basis.

SLH will review and upgrade as required in consultation with tenants the security and safety aspects of homes, particularly blocks of flats, including the provision of door entry systems. Where practicable tenants will be given at least 28 days notice of improvement works to be carried out. When it is essential that alternative or temporary accommodation is provided then reasonable disturbance expenses will be paid to tenants.

3.12 Aids and Adaptations

As part of its commitment to facilitating and supporting independent living, SLH will carry out alterations to meet the special needs of individuals to enhance their lifestyle and where appropriate enable them to remain in their current home. In this respect SLH will liaise with Social Services, Occupational Therapy and other appropriate agencies.

SLH aims to assist tenants with a disability in securing aids and adaptations to their homes by a combination of the following:-

- Directly undertaking the work;
- Seeking grants from the local authority and/or other agencies to enable the work to be undertaken.

SLH may, at its sole discretion, undertake works without grant assistance where:-

- Undue hardship would otherwise result;
- Where local authority grant is discretionary and an application is rejected;
- Where top-up funds are required.

SLH will maintain all aids and adaptations which it has installed or supported and will replace these at the end of their economic life provided they are still required. Typically, aids and adaptations may include:-

- grab rails, door alterations, ramps, handrails, stair lifts etc;
- low access baths, provision of showers, lever taps, wc adjustments;
- alterations to kitchen units, raising electrical sockets and lowering switches.

In meeting the above objectives SLH will provide a responsive service to tenants who are or become vulnerable or who have special needs arising through disability or infirmity.

3.13 Tenders and Contracts

All work will be carried out in accordance with Standing Orders, including Financial Regulations, and SLH Procurement Strategy.

4.0 Key Targets and Performance Indicators

% of urgent repairs completed within Government prescribed time limits.

% of all repairs requested by tenants completed within local target times.

The average time taken to complete non-urgent responsive repairs (number of days).

% of repairs jobs for which an appointment was both made and kept by the Authority.

% of responsive (but not emergency) repair for which the authority both made and kept an appointment.

Decent Homes Standard.

Comparative benchmarking on Best Value Performance Indicators on maintenance and repairs and vacant dwellings.

Performance against standards and time targets specified above.

Compliance with statutory requirements for the condition of tenanted premises, the Tenancy Agreement and Handbook.

Numbers and type of complaints from tenants.

5.0 Monitoring, Review and Consultation Process

Regular reports to the Board, South Lakeland District Council and Tenants' Committee reviewing performance against targets and benchmarking comparisons.

Reports to the tenant representative groups and other means of consultation with tenants and tenant representatives.

6.0 Service Development and Review Priority

Service development will be dictated by the Best Value Review and ongoing evaluation of the newly combined maintenance and Direct Works Team. Ongoing review is critical given the need to deliver the Decent Homes Standard on time and emphasis placed on improvements to tenants.

Policy Review Priority - High.

Repair Standard

EMERGENCY PRIORITY ❶

Visited and made safe within 2 hours, and completed within 2 days.

Where there is danger to persons and/or property, risk or serious damage to the property or the integrity of the building affected, for example:-

- major bursts;
- loss of electrical power;
- blocked or overflowing sewers;
- escape of gas;
- electrical faults;
- storm or flood damage;
- repairs required to ensure buildings are secure;
- defects to sanitary appliances where only one exists in a dwelling;
- complete loss of heating or water systems.

URGENT PRIORITY ❷

Completed within one week from the date the works order issued.

Where the remedying of defects is likely to cause nuisance or likely to affect the personal comfort or safety of the occupants. For example:-

- repairs to supplementary heating;
- replacement of sanitary fittings;
- repairs to roof (where there is no actual leak);
- replacement of rotten timber sections.

ROUTINE PRIORITY ❸

Response within four weeks (28 days) from date of issue of works order.

NON URGENT PRIORITY ❹

Where works are routine and where material delivery and/or supply may be longer than 28 days but not more than 12 weeks (84 days) from the date of the issue of the works order.

When tenants report repairs they will be given an appointment according to the priority category. Certain repairs may need to be inspected before an order can be placed to determine the nature of the work and its priority. Where SLH fails to meet its targets or fulfil an appointment, tenants will have the benefit of the right to repair.