

Repairs policy

This document gives the policy on the Exeter City Council's repairs and maintenance service.

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i Version Control for Repairs Policy

Date Revised	22/2/11 29/7/11	Author	Neil Shire, Repairs and Technical Services Manager Repairs Partnership Board
Date Approved		Approved by	Lawrence Blake
Date effective from		Lead Officer	Repairs and Technical Services Manager
Review Due		Staff involved	Technical Officers (TO) Housing Assistants (HA) Stakeholders
Location			

ii Repairs Policy statement

The Exeter City Council's Housing Repairs Policy will support the Housing Services mission statement of '**Offering affordable housing choices whilst building and supporting communities**'.

This will be done by providing a high quality repairs service to all its stakeholders that is efficient and responsive and offers best value in all areas of the service.

iii Aims and objectives of the Repairs Service

- 1) to be Efficient
- 2) to be cost effective
- 3) to be responsible
- 4) be accountable to all stakeholders
- 5) responsive and flexible to the needs of all stakeholders
- 6) to encourage innovation and continuous improvement in the Repairs Service.
- 7) maintain the Housing Service assets to a high standard.
- 8) provides properties that are safe to live in.
- 9) ensure that the service is fair and equitable to all stakeholders.
- 10) to develop the service in consultation with leaseholders to the benefit of all involved.

iv Related procedures

- Asset Management Strategy 2009 -2015
- Devon Homechoice
- Home Adaptation policy 2011
- Various other Repair Procedure documents

vi Risk management

A risk management table for this procedure can be found at [Appendix 1](#).

vii Staff responsibilities

Head of Housing Services – Responsible for all Housing Services, including the Repairs Service.

Repairs and Technical Services Manager has the overall responsibility for the Repairs Service.

Officers in Repairs and Technical Services - Day to day provision of the service including dealing with reports from customers, ordering works, visiting homes to identify defects, specifying works to contractors, dealing with any complaints,

contractor supervision and management, quality checks and other administration duties in relation to the Repairs Service.

iv

Service definition

The Repairs Service is defined as covering all responsive, programmed and cyclical maintenance works.

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Sections

1. **Commitment**

The provision of a first class modern Repairs Service can only be achieved through the commitment of all the parties involved. This includes the Council, its contractors and the tenants and leaseholders.

The Repairs and Maintenance Charter that has been signed by the Council, Contractors and Tenant Representatives and sets out five pledges that will define the way the service is provided –

1. all parties will come together in the spirit of consideration, honesty and joint working.
2. all matters will be dealt with in a spirit of respect and mutual cooperation and understanding.
3. matters will be considered enthusiastically resolving any issues as a team.
4. all members will have an equal standing, embracing the principles of Equal Opportunities.
5. innovation and continuous improvement will be encouraged.

To achieve these pledges the Council will –

- complete responsive repairs within defined timescales.
- treat all stakeholders with courtesy and respect.
- where possible complete repairs right first time.
- maintain our homes to the Decent Homes Standard.
- offer appointments for responsive repairs (apart from emergencies)
- ensure properties are safe to live in.
- involve stakeholders in service monitoring and improvements.
- where required carry out all inspections within 7 working days.
- when relet ensure all properties meet the void standard.
- when reporting the responsive repair we will let you know how soon it will be completed and if it can be completed right first time.

And tenants will –

- ensure that any Council asset is not damaged maliciously.
- abide by the terms and conditions of their tenancy agreement.
- allow reasonable access so that repairs can be undertaken.
- treat all Council officers and contractors with courtesy and respect.
- ensure that all repairs are reported promptly.
- obtain permission before you carry out any alterations to a Council property.

2. **Responsibilities**

The repair duties of the Council are set out legally within the terms of your tenancy and defined by The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 but we must also abide by other legal requirements such as The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998.

To summarise these legal requirements we must keep your home in good condition. We will repair and maintain –

- the structure and exterior of the building – roofs, walls, ceilings, window frames, external doors, drains and gutters.

- Kitchen and Bathroom fixtures – basins, sinks, baths and washbasins.
- electrical wiring, gas pipes and water pipes.
- space and water heating equipment.
- communal areas such as lifts, stairs, communal hallways, landings, lighting and entrances.
- some exterior paths, fences, paving and walls.

Full listings of individual items and their responsibilities can be found in the 'Maintaining Your Home' booklet and in Appendix 3.

There are certain works that the Council does not carry out and from time to time we reserve the right to change them, this is normally as a result to changes in legislation.

- tenants are responsible for keeping their home in a reasonable condition and for attempting to solve minor problems – a full list can be found in the 'Maintaining Your Home' booklet and in Appendix 3.
- tenants must take reasonable precautions to prevent damage to the property by fire, frost, blocking of waste pipes. The Council reserves the right to charge if it considers reasonable precautions were not taken.
- tenants should ensure they have their own contents insurance as the Council cannot be held liable for the loss of tenants good unless it has been negligent in some way.

3. Reporting a repair

There a variety of methods of reporting a repair –

- Telephoning the Repairs Team on 01392 265031.
- In person at the Customer First Centre, Civic Centre.
- In writing to Housing Services, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1RQ.
- SMS text on 07772346599
- By fax to 01392 265182.
- By email – housing.repairs@exeter.gov.uk
- Via the website - www.exeter.gov.uk

At the time of reporting a repair to one of the Repairs Team, you will be supplied with the following information –

- priority of the repair.
- the negotiated appointment date for either the repair to be undertaken or an inspection to be carried out.
- if the repair can be completed in one visit.
- call reference.
- contractor.

- confirm your contact details.

4. **Repair categories and timescales**

Each time a Responsive Repair is ordered it is allocated against one of three response categories –

- Emergency Repairs – These will be attended to the same working day but it may well only be a temporary repair
- Urgent repairs – These will be completed within 5 working days.
- Routine repairs – Will be completed within 20 working days.

A list of repairs allocated to each of these response categories can be found in Appendix 2.

The Council has a diverse customer base with a great variety of needs. When allocating a repair category the Council will give due consideration to these needs and can decide to undertake works more quickly than it would normally, an example of where these considerations would be given are –

- customer has disability and the repair is affecting the use of the property.
- customers mobility is affected.
- customers health and safety is affected especially where it impacts on the young or the elderly.

5. **Programmed or major works and Decent Homes**

The Council recognises that it may be appropriate to carry out some larger scale works as part of a programme rather than treating them as responsive repairs. An example of these may be where the same repair is needed to multiple properties in the same area or where a repair is no longer possible or economic to carry out and therefore complete replacement is the only option and this may occur in circumstances when a new roof, a complete new Kitchen or Bathroom is required.

In these situations the matter will be passed the Major Works section.

All stock will maintained to the minimum criteria of the Decent Homes Standard and where possible homes will exceed the standard. The Council is committed to improvement programmes such as –

- Kitchen refurbishment
- Bathroom refurbishment.
- new roofs.
- installation of new energy efficient heating systems.
- low maintenance works such as plastic gutters, soffits and barge boards.

6 **Cyclical maintenance**

Some items require regular periodic maintenance to ensure that they are kept in good condition or to ensure that are in a safe to use, the types of repair this covers is –

- gas servicing
- external repairs and painting
- lift maintenance
- Legionella testing

- smoke detector servicing
- door entry maintenance
- servicing of mechanical extractor fans

7 **Repairs completed in one visit**

Where possible we will carry out repairs in one visit. The operative will call at the property knowing what work is required and will carry the appropriate materials on the van.

Some larger jobs cannot be completed in one visit and if this is the case a further appointment date will be agreed.

8 **Voids**

When a property is relet it will be safe to move into and will comply with the Councils agreed standard. All properties will have a welcome pack left for the new incoming tenant.

If any works have not been completed these will be identified to the new tenant and arrangements made for when the work will be done.

9 **Appointments**

The Council will offer mutually agreed appointments for the morning, afternoon, school run and evening including Saturday mornings for the following –

- work to be carried out
- pre inspections
- post inspections.

Where we fail to make an appointment compensation of £10.00 will be paid for each missed appointment.

Normally if a customer fails to keep a pre arranged appointment the order or request for works will be cancelled and the customer will have to contact the Council to make further arrangements. The Council reserves the right to charge for missed appointments.

The Council will not offer appointments for Emergency works or for works in communal areas.

10 **Pre inspections**

Some works will require a pre inspection, this is normally done in the following circumstances –

- the estimated value of the work is over £100.00
- when reporting the repair the customer is not able to describe the works in enough detail.
- the repair might be the customer's responsibility.
- measurements, specifications, schedules etc are required prior to ordering the repair.
- reports of dampness or condensation.

11 **Post inspections**

10% of all works undertaken by the contractors will be post inspected. These will normally be selected at random but those of a higher value or more complex in nature will be identified and a higher number of these compared to more routine repairs will be inspected. Also any matters or concerns raised by customers will be post inspected.

Minimum value orders will not be post inspected unless a customer reports a specific problem with the works.

12 Contractors

The Council will only appoint contractors of suitable quality and integrity to carry out works on its properties.

The Council will involve tenants in the complete process of contractor selection.

Each contractor will operate under the Council code of conduct.

The Council will deal with its contractors in a spirit of cooperation, joint working and mutual trust and understanding.

13 Equality and diversity

The repairs and maintenance service will adhere to the Council Equality and Diversity policy and procedures.

It will promote fairness and equality within the service regardless of a person's age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief and ethnicity.

Each policy related to the service will have an Equality Impact Assessment carried out to ensure no group is being disadvantaged because of the work it is doing.

We will work with all stakeholders to promote in a positive way the diverse society that we live in.

14 Vulnerable groups

We will ensure that vulnerable groups are adequately supported so that they can benefit from the services we offer.

In general terms the groups we will assist are –

- people with learning disabilities.
- people with some other form of disability such as hearing, vision or physical impairment that may impact on their ability to use the service.
- older persons who require some form of support.
- expectant mothers or single parent families who have little external support.

We will tailor our services where possible to meet the individual needs of these groups. We will make use of the customer profile information available and actively promote our services depending on the information available.

Some of the examples of the ways these groups will be aided are –

- provision of leaflets in various formats including large print, Braille and foreign languages.
- access to an interpretation service.
- adjusting of repair priorities and response times if a delay in the work being undertaken would have an impact on the person's health or well being.
- undertaking certain works that are tenant's responsibility either free of charge or at a reduced rate.
- offering a wide range of options to report repairs.

15 Resident involvement

The Council acknowledges the central role that residents have in tailoring the repairs and maintenance service.

It is crucial that as many residents as possible have a chance to provide their views on the service and this is why the work the housing service is doing on tenant profiling is so important and the repairs and maintenance service will

contribute where possible with this exercise.

Residents will have the chance to contribute to the service in the following areas-

- establishing priorities and value for money.
- defining standards.
- performance monitoring.
- allocation of budgets.
- procurement of services.
- service improvements and enhancements.

The Council offers various ways for residents to become involved and share their opinions –

- via the Tenants And Leaseholders Committee.
- membership on the Repairs Partnership Board
- membership of various focus groups including –
 - Home Adaptations Service
 - Garden Assistance Scheme
 - Decorating Assistance Scheme
- involvement in the Resident Auditor Team.
- procurement of works.
- involvement in the Performance Review Committee.

16 Monitoring and scrutiny of the service

Because of the importance of the service to customers it is important that then standards are constantly monitored by both staff and customers to ensure they are achieving the targets set down.

The following methods will be used to monitor performance and allow scrutiny of the service –

- satisfaction surveys – the results of which will be fed back to the Performance Review Cttee.
- complaints – All outcomes to complaints will be analysed and will be used to shape service delivery.
- contractor meetings – Key Performance Indicator to be established with each contractor and reported and discussed at operational meetings.
- performance Review Cttee – Report to committee of customers and members on agreed portfolio of performance indicators. This performance to be compared against benchmark information from other organisations.
- local offers – performance on agreed Local Offers to be reported the PRC.
- tenants magazine – Annual report analyses performance.

17 Choices

We will offer customers choices wherever possible. Normally on responsive maintenance fixtures and fittings are replaced on a like for like basis.

During major works there is more scope to allow tenants choices for example when a new Kitchen is fitted customers can select from a variety of materials and colours and they can also participate in the design or layout to ensure the improvement best serves their needs.

In consultation with customers choices will be made by them for the programme priorities.

18 Rechargeable repairs

Customers are responsible for keeping their property in good order, where it

becomes damaged because of wilful neglect or damage the Council will charge for the repairs to be undertaken.

If the customer wants these types of repairs to be completed then they will be asked to sign a declaration accepting the charge, where possible this will be recovered prior to the work carried out.

There are certain repairs for which the tenant is responsible and these are detailed elsewhere in this policy. In extreme circumstances (if the tenant is in a vulnerability group) the Council will undertake these repairs and recharge the tenant.

More details on rechargeable repairs can be found in the policy documents on rechargeable repairs in tenanted and void properties.

19 **Internal decoration**

Internal decorations are the responsibility of the tenant. Occasionally when carrying out repairs decorations can be disturbed although we will try and keep this to a minimum. On some works redecoration is included with the work, for example where door linings have to be replaced.

Should decorations become damaged then we will offer decorating materials to help towards the redecoration.

20 **Assistance schemes**

The Council will offer assistance to tenants with internal decorating and garden maintenance if they satisfy certain criteria.

Tenants who are over 70 years old age or have certain disabilities will be offered assistance, which will include one room being decorated at regular intervals or regular grass cutting and shrub maintenance.

21 **Gaining entry**

In cases of emergency the Council may want to gain access to a property to resolve a situation that may have an impact on the health and safety of residents or to avoid damage to the fabric of the building. This procedure deals specifically with cases in flats where a situation in an upstairs flat such as a pipe leak is having a detrimental affect on the property below but the steps to be taken can equally apply to any circumstance where access is urgently required. This can apply equally to calls taken during normal and out of office hours.

Under the tenancy agreement immediate access can only be gained without any prior written notice in a genuine emergency. Under the terms of the tenancy agreement the definition of an emergency is –

“This means a real and immediate risk of harm to you (the tenant) or a real and immediate risk of serious structural damage to your home or to a neighbour’s home (or all of these). We will decide whether a situation is an emergency or not.”

To meet this definition it the call can only be deemed a genuine emergency on the following criteria –

1. availability of occupant in upstairs property;
2. severity of water penetration;

3. timescales for resolving issue.

Step 1

If a report is received of a pipe leak or other defect –

- assess availability of occupier in flat above. Does the caller know for example if the occupants are out for a few hours or a much longer period. Have they checked with the other neighbours about this.
- check Capita or any contact information on the resident above.
- how bad is the water penetration. In circumstances where the leak can be contained the advice should be to the caller to put down buckets etc that can contain the leak as this would not be a genuine emergency. If the leak cannot be contained and the structure such as the ceiling is being affected then this can be deemed a genuine emergency.
- where required arrange for an electrician to call and check the electrics. It may be also appropriate for an operative to be called to attempt some sort of holding repair to the flat below.

Step 2

If it has been decided that a genuine emergency exists –

- contact the appropriate operative to arrange to gain entry.
- it is better to arrange for a witness to be present.
- when access has been gained the operative should either isolate or carry out a repair. If in doubt the stopcock should be turned off.
- if the locks are changed a note should be left on the door where the new keys can be collected from.

Step 3

- where appropriate occupants will need to be rehoused, other procedures are in place to deal with these circumstances.
- either the same or the next working day an assessment will be made of the tenants needs and the level of damage at the property.
- Exeter City Council do not have carpet cleaners or dehumidifiers and tenants should be told to arrange through their own insurance for this to be carried out.
- if they do not have their own insurance the ECC can offer a limited service so that tenants can move back in as soon as possible.

Appendix 1 Risk Management

Financial:

Risk The repairs and maintenance service is a high value service and expenditure over a 12 month period is in excess of 2m. If the policy is not followed funds can be wasted unnecessarily.

Controls – Routine scrutiny of budgets should ensure expenditure is within projected targets. Procurement rules should be followed. Audits in place to ensure policy is followed.

Future actions – Regular review of policy document (annually). Contractor audits to be put in place.

Health and safety:

Risk.- Tenants, their friends and family along with contractors and council officers could be exposed to hazards if work is not done correctly or undertaken at all.

Controls – Appropriate risk assessments and safe methods of work to be in place. Health and Safety figures to be reported on a regular basis.

Future actions – Carry out Health and Safety audits. Produce risk assessments for work that is undertaken.

Legal and regulatory:

Risk - Works do not comply with legislation or regulations

Controls – Engage competent contractors and employ robust audit of works. Post inspections. Ask Housing Solicitor to comment on policy documents.

Future actions – Review audit procedures on annual basis.

Quality

Risks –

- Staff insufficiently trained in the procedures
- Policy and procedures do not reflect current legislation or good practice.
- Products not of the right quality.
- Work is of poor quality damaging reputation.

Controls –

- Use approved products
- Staff appropriately trained
- Use contractors from select list.

Future actions –

- Monitor contractors performance.
- Monitor complaints from customers.

Appendix 2

Emergency repairs – attended to within 4 hours

An emergency repair is one that is actually or potentially dangerous, or a serious risk to health. It is likely to include repairs where immediate action will prevent serious damage to the property. However a tenants circumstances (i.e. new born baby, disabilities etc) may dictate that a situation arises that although not included in the list below makes the repair an emergency.

- Loss of entire supply of electricity, water or gas.
- Loss of part supply e.g. no lights, no drinking water.
- Unsafe power, lighting socket or electrical fitting.
- Loss of entire heating provision in cold weather or where the tenant is elderly, disabled, chronically sick or has children under 5.
- Loss of hot water facilities.
- All serious plumbing leaks where the fabric of the building is in danger.
- Gas leaks.
- Serious roof leaks and other major structural failures.
- Securing of property.
- Blocked WC when sole WC in dwelling.
- Blocked foul sewer.
- Toilet not working when sole WC in dwelling.
- Gaining entry where keys lost etc (tenant will be liable for call out fee in these circumstances).
- Loss of all communal lighting.

The intention for emergency works is to make the situation safe. For example this may include isolating the water supply when a major leak occurs or to board up a broken window that makes a property insecure. Some minor repairs may be able to be completed at the emergency visit but if required any follow up work will be given either an urgent or routine response category.

If an emergency repair is requested by a tenant but subsequently we are informed that it was not a genuine emergency we reserve the right to recharge for the service.

Urgent repairs – to be completed within 5 working days

These are repairs that significantly affect the tenant's enjoyment of the property. In certain circumstances these repairs could be treated as emergencies –

- Partial loss of space or water heating.
- Partial loss of lighting or electrical power.
- Toilet blocked, leaking or not flushing (where not sole WC in property).
- Blocked sink, bath or basin.
- Leak from water pipe, heating pipe, tank or cistern.
- Leaking roof.
- Loose or detached banister or handrail.

- Rotten timber floor or stair tread.
- Door entry phone not working.
- Extractor fan not working.

Routine repairs – to be completed within 20 working days

All other repairs than those listed above.

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Appendix 3

There are certain repairs which Exeter City Council deems to be the tenants' responsibility, these include –

- All domestic equipment supplied by tenants, such as cookers, fridges, showers etc.
- Repair or replacement of any item that is damaged deliberately or by the tenants neglect, including poor standard “do it yourself” work. The Exeter City Council reserves the right to undertake this work and recharge the tenant (see section titled “Rechargeable Repairs”).
- Chimney sweeping.
- Gaining entry and replacing locks where keys are lost.
- Clothes posts, hooks and rotary driers.
- Internal decoration.
- Fuses, plugs and light bulbs.
- Repairs to gate catches and locks.
- Repairs to dividing wooden, concrete or metal fences and gates between properties.
- Repairs to footpaths excluding those to front and rear doors.
- Repair/renewal TV aerials and sockets apart from those properties on a communal aerial system.
- All glass apart from when damaged by a third party.
- Renewing WC seat (new one to be provided at start of new tenancy).