

Sunderland City Council

Repairs and Maintenance Policy

Document Title:	Repairs and Maintenance Policy
Version:	V.1.0
Date Effective (last update):	June 2026
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Approved by:	Housing Board
Next Review Date:	June 2028

1. Introduction

Sunderland City Council are committed to delivering a high-quality, modern and effective repairs service and to providing homes that are comfortable, well maintained and safe for people to live in.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all Council staff and Tenants are aware, understand and are equipped with information to deliver the requirements of the repairs service.

3. Aims

This policy recognises that a successful repairs service is a vital part of the provision of quality homes for the people of Sunderland and its communities and the Council's tenants.

The policy is designed to meet the following aims and objectives:

- To deliver an excellent, consistent and modern repairs service
- To provide an efficient service that ensures our properties are maintained
- To ensure that all Tenants live in a safe and habitable environment
- To comply with relevant statutory and regulatory obligations
- To deliver the promises made within the service standards (Appendix A)

- To promote a culture of innovation and incorporate emerging technologies

4. Objectives

- To interact and collate feedback from Tenants to shape service delivery
- To continually strive for the highest levels of performance
- To place emphasis on the quality of all repairs and maintenance
- To clearly define the repair responsibilities of the Council and Tenants
- To provide a service that is accessible and convenient for Tenants
- To undertake repairs in the most efficient manner

5.Scope

This policy covers the responsive repairs and maintenance service to properties and communal areas owned and/or managed by Sunderland City Council.

6. Roles and responsibilities

The Executive Director of Economy and Place will have overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

The Housing Operations Manager will ensure that the policy and associated procedures are embedded within the operational delivery of the repairs service and that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are adequately trained to carry them out.

The Councils staff and Tenants will follow the policy guidelines and its approach to repairs and maintenance.

7.Legislation and Guidance

The Council will deliver a repairs service that complies with regulatory and statutory obligations to ensure the health, safety and security of people and property are maintained at all times.

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) provides The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from 2012 including 'The Home Standard'.

The key areas of legislation in this policy are:

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Building Regulations Act 1984
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Housing Act 2004
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- General Data Protection Regulations Act 2018

- The Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Awaab's Law 2025

8. Definitions

'Tenant' – Any tenant or leaseholder of a property owned and/or managed by the Council.

'Repair' – The process of rectifying a component or installation when it is faulty or in a state of disrepair; in a Council owned and / or managed property.

9.Repair Responsibilities

The responsibility for repairing and maintaining homes is shared between the Council and Tenants. A full list of responsibilities is within the tenancy agreement and outlined within Appendix B.

The Council are committed to providing self-help guidance for repairs that are the responsibility of the Tenant.

Tenants must report repairs that are the responsibility of the Council, as soon as reasonably possible, to ensure the property does not fall into disrepair.

10. Repair Categories

Repairs are classified and will be responded to within repair categories and timescales.

Emergency Repairs

This is a repair that could cause danger to life or property if not attended to immediately.

We will aim to make it safe within 4 hours, and, where possible, complete a repair.

Examples of an emergency repair:

- Uncontainable flooding
- Water on electrics
- Broken heating (between 31 October and 1 May)
- Insecure properties

Please note, we may charge you if a repair that was reported as an emergency turns out not to be so.

Urgent Repairs

This is a repair that affects your ability to live comfortably in your home.

We will aim to repair within 5 working days in accordance with government guidelines.

Examples of an urgent repair:

- Power failure
- Unsafe power or lighting socket/fitting
- Broken heating (between 30 April and 1 November)
- Total or partial loss of water supply
- Blocked toilet, sink, bath or basin
- Tap which cannot be turned

- Insecure external window, door or lock

11. General Repairs

This is a repair that is non-urgent and doesn't adversely affect the use of your home.

The estimated repair time is within 20 working days.

Examples of a routine repair:

- Plastering
- Brickwork
- Joinery

12. Planned programme Repair

The Council will also carry out planned maintenance to properties as part of wider maintenance programmes. This is a repair where we are able to ensure better value for money by including them in a maintenance programme.

We will inform all tenants when a repair has been included into a maintenance programme and will contact you prior to beginning the programmed works.

These repairs will be completed within 3 months.

Examples of planned repairs:

- Fencing
- Guttering
- Footpaths
- External brickwork

13. Regular maintenance

These repairs are regular and repeated.

Examples:

- Gas servicing
- Water hygiene
- Electrical testing

14. Gas and solid fuel servicing

All properties that contain gas appliances will be serviced on an annual basis.

15. Electrical periodic testing

Every five years a full electrical safety test will be undertaken to all properties.

16. Out of Hours

Emergency repairs are available outside of day-to-day office hours for repairs that pose an immediate risk to people and or property.

17. Reporting Repairs

Tenants can report repairs by:

- Telephone
- E-mail
- In person by contacting any member of Sunderland City Council.

The Council's aim is to arrange a convenient appointment at first contact with the Tenant and complete the repair, where possible, within one visit.

Access to the repairs service will be reviewed regularly ensuring commitment to future technologies and embracing new ways of working.

18. Appointment Timescales

The Council will offer a flexible appointment system for repairs and tenants reporting a repair will be offered a time when the repair can be carried out within the appropriate repair category.

19. Individual Circumstances

The Council embrace the diversity of our Tenants and will ensure that their services allow for the needs of all individuals. The Council will therefore collate specific household needs at the first point of contact to ensure all reasonable adjustments are incorporated to the service/s.

20. Inspections

Pre-inspections

A pre-inspection maybe required before a repair appointment can be arranged. This will include circumstances where the scope of the repair is unknown. Following the inspection, the repair will be diagnosed and planned within the appropriate timescales.

All pre-inspections will be coordinated by the Repairs and Maintenance Team.

Post Inspections

To ensure the Council are delivering a high-quality repairs service and are committed to adding value, a sample of completed repairs will be inspected for quality and value for money.

21. No Access

In the event that we are unable to gain access due to the fact that the property is not accessible (i.e. the Tenant is not home) the Tenant will be notified in writing of cancellation and required to contact the Council to raise another appointment.

Where a no access occurs, and the repair is related to health and safety matters or materials have been ordered, the repair will stay open to allow time to make further contact to rearrange the repair.

The Council will monitor no accessed visits to ensure a property does not fall into disrepair.

22. Rechargeable Repairs

Damage that has been caused by a Tenant, other residents, or visitors to a property, may be rechargeable. A rechargeable repair is defined as, 'repairs that are above and beyond normal wear and tear, and arise from abuse, accidental damage, neglect or deliberate and / or malicious damage'.

The Council are not responsible for any repair or replacement needed as a result of any action or neglect by the Tenant and their family, any sub-tenant, visitor, third party or pets.

The Council are not responsible for the repair or replacement of anything that has been installed or fitted in the property by the current Tenant without our written consent.

We will record what we consider rechargeable repairs with photographs and clearly set out opinion of operative as to why the repair is considered rechargeable. This information will be communicated to the Tenant in writing with a request for repayment of the quantified costs.

Tenants and former tenants are responsible for (and will be charged for) any costs incurred by the Council as a result of;

- Damage to the property resulting from an act of intentional or negligent behaviour by the Tenant, anybody living with the Tenant, or anybody visiting the home.
- Any Court costs resulting from a breach of tenancy conditions – for example as a result of incidents of antisocial behaviour or in gaining access to properties to carry out a gas service.
- Boarding up and re-glazing windows, resulting from an act of intentional or negligent behaviour by the tenant, anybody living with the tenant or anybody visiting the tenant's home.
- Lock changes and replacement keys if the tenant has lost their keys or locked him or herself out of the property.
- Damage to the property following police action where the police are not responsible for repair.
- Removal of items left in communal areas.
- Clearing properties at any time during a tenancy or at the point the tenancy ends
- Clearing gardens at any time during a tenancy or at the point the tenancy ends
- Abuse of the emergency call out service e.g. when the repair required is not really an emergency but has been reported as such.
- Making good any alterations or improvement* carried out by the Tenant which has resulted in damage to the property or neighbouring property.

**An improvement is defined as a change or alteration to the property which would bring it to a more desirable condition without reducing value. Any alterations must also meet any associated Health and Safety regulations when inspected to be defined as an improvement.*

23. Tenant Led Alterations

Where Tenants have carried out alterations or improvements to a property the Council will not be responsible for carrying out repairs to these alterations unless this has been previously agreed in writing.

24. High levels of repair reporting

Where a Tenant has reported a high level of repairs over a set period of time, an inspection will be carried out to the property to determine the cause of the repairs. The inspection will identify whether further repairs should be raised, to provide increased value for money or the tenant warned for the ongoing creation of repairs to the property. There may also be an indication of safeguarding concerns and appropriate action taken in line with local safeguarding policies where needed.

High level of repairs is defined as two of the same type of repair in any 12-month period.

25. Performance and tenant satisfaction

The Council will collate and monitor performance information in relation to repairs strategic key performance indicators.

Tenant satisfaction testing will be conducted as part of the Annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures collation.

Feedback and analysis will be used to identify trends and to continuously improve service delivery.

26. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every three years unless there is a significant incident, a major change in circumstances or legislation which would warrant a review being carried out at an earlier date.

Appendix A Repairs and Maintenance Service Standards

Sunderland City Council Housing Service will:

- Provide you with a convenient way to report your repair
- Offer flexible appointments to carry out your repair
- Be polite and respectful when carrying out work in your home
- Where possible, carry out your repair on the first visit
- Make you aware when we are unable to complete your repair at first visit and keep you updated on progress
- Undertake a regular programme of improvements and keep you informed of when this work will take place

Tenants Must:

- Inform the Council of all repairs required to your home
- Give Council employees (and selected contractors) access to your property to carry out any necessary work, including your annual safety checks

Appendix B – Repair Responsibilities

- Sunderland City Council – (SC) • Tenant – (C)

External		
Communal areas including lifts and stairs maintenance	SC	
Garages and outbuildings, if owned by SCC (excluding unauthorised alterations)	SC	
Garden maintenance and clearance of rubbish		C
Curtilage fencing, walls and gates erected by SCC or with our permission	SC	
Curtilage fencing, walls and gates erected by the Tenant, (we will remove if it is presenting a health and safety risk)		C
Footpaths and hard standings within the curtilage	SC	
Footpaths and hard standings installed by the Tenant		C
Clothes lines and rotary driers installed by the Tenant		C
External painting and decoration	SC	
External masonry, cladding and rendering	SC	

INTERNAL		
Doors and Windows	SC	
Gaining entry to the property due to keys lost, locking and lock-out*	SC	
Glazing and other damage	SC	
Outside doors, frames and thresholds	SC	

Outside door locks and ironmongery	SC	
Internal doors catches and handles	SC	
Adjusting doors for new floor coverings		C
Door entry systems	SC	
Door vents repairs (the Tenant has the responsibility to keep vents clear to ensure permanent ventilation for heating appliances)	SC	
Window frames and architraves, cills	SC	
Window ironmongery and trickle vents	SC	
Window blinds removing and adjusting		C
Internal timber or UPVC window boards	SC	
Additional window locks		C
Security door chains		C

Roofs and Canopies		
Aerials, satellite dishes, telephone equipment and all associated cabling		C
Chimneys and chimney stacks and pots	SC	
Roof structure and coverings	SC	
Fascia, soffit and barge boards	SC	
Guttering rainwater pipes and clips	SC	
Concrete canopies over doors and windows	SC	

Pipes and Drainage		
Soil vent pipes and clips	SC	
Drain and gully surrounds	SC	
Drain grids	SC	
Keeping gully grids clean		C
Inspection chambers	SC	
Clearing blocked drainage (not the water authority primary drainage)	SC	

Walls		
Foundations and damp-proof course	SC	
Core vents repairs (the Tenant has the responsibility to keep vents clear to ensure permanent ventilation for heating appliances)	SC	
Major plaster work	SC	

Minor plaster work such as small holes and minor imperfection in finish		C
Decorative finishes - paint, panelling and Artex (some Artex may contain small traces of asbestos) Tenants must seek permission from us before removing Artex finishes		C
Wall tiling if provided by us (where tiles are replaced an exact match cannot be guaranteed)	SC	
Wall tiling installed by the Tenant		C
Skirting boards	SC	
Decorative dado and picture rails installed by the Tenant		C

Ceilings		
Major plaster work	SC	
Minor plaster work such as small holes and minor imperfection in finish		C
Decorative finishes - paint and Artex (some Artex may contain small traces of asbestos) Tenants must seek permission from us before removing Artex finishes		C
Decorative plaster coving		C

Floors		
Timber floorboards and joists	SC	
Concrete and screeds	SC	
Vinyl flooring and floor tiles provided by us (where tiles are replaced an exact match cannot be guaranteed)	SC	
Flooring in communal areas	SC	
Floor covering and carpets (not in communal areas)		C

Staircases		
Treads, risers, banisters, spindles and handrails	SC	
Additional handrails and brackets		C

Bathroom		
Bath panels	SC	
Wooden airing cupboard shelving slats		C
Internal pipe boxing (if provided by us)	SC	
Sink unit	SC	
Wash hand basin	SC	

Bath/ shower tray	SC	
Showers	SC	
Seals to bath/ sink	SC	
Toilet seat and lid		C
Shower curtain		C

Kitchens		
Kitchen cupboards	SC	
Cupboard drawers and doors	SC	
Cupboard handles, catches and hinges	SC	
Worktops	SC	
Any damage to the above caused by misuse		C

Plumbing		
Water service pipes from internal stop tap, overflow pipes and water tanks	SC	
Blocked sink, bath and wash hand basin waste pipes	SC	
Blocked toilets	SC	
Taps, stop tap and wheel valves	SC	
Toilet flushing system	SC	
Plugs and chains		C
Bleeding air from radiators		C
Repairs to plumbing due to misuse, decorating, carpet fitting etc		C

Gas Services		
Gas meter and supply of gas		C
Gas pipework	SC	
Gas boilers	SC	
Gas fires	SC	
Radiators, valves, time clocks and thermostats	SC	
Gas cooker disconnection and reconnection		C

Electrics		
Electric meter and supply of electric		C
Supply of electric		C
Electric consumer unit and trip switches	SC	
Unit and trip switches	SC	

Electrical wiring, sockets and light fittings	SC	
External light fittings (if installed by us)	SC	
Wired- in smoke and carbon monoxide alarms	SC	
Standard light bulbs (except communal areas)		C
Sealed lights and fluorescent tubes found in kitchens and bathrooms	SC	
Electric storage heaters (if installed by us)	SC	
Electric focal point fires (if installed by us)	SC	
Immersion heaters	SC	
Extractor fans	SC	
Heat recovery units / air-source heating and PV installations (if fitted by Council)	SC	
Electrical appliances plugs and fuses		C
Heat recover units / air-Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms	SC	
Electric cooker disconnection and reconnection		C

Adaptations		
Adaptations as a result of recommendations made by social services	SC	
Solid Fuel Appliances		
General cleaning of appliances		C
Repair of component parts inclusive of two services per year	SC	
Energy efficiency		
Draught proofing	SC	
Loft Insulation	SC	