



Responsive Repairs Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy sets out our approach to delivering responsive repairs services to Southern Housing residents.
- 1.2 A 'responsive repair' is day-to-day maintenance work in response to a request from a resident or something we, or a third party, have identified. It's sometimes known as a 'reactive repair.'
- 1.3 When we use 'you' and 'your', we mean residents. The terms 'we', 'our' and 'us' mean Southern Housing.

1.4 Scope

- 1.4.1 This Policy applies to all homes, buildings, and communal areas where we're responsible for carrying out responsive repairs. This is determined by the tenancy, lease, licence, or management agreement.
- 1.4.2 During the Defect Liability Period¹ for new homes, the development contractor is responsible for rectifying defects. Defects are faults or breakdowns caused by faulty design, workmanship, or materials.

Residents (and third parties) can report defects in the same way as any other repair, but response times may vary.

- 1.4.3 Some of our homes have specific leases and/or management agreements. This means the specific scope, requirements, and response times of responsive repairs may vary but the overall service approach still applies.

Terms set out in individual occupancy agreements and leases take precedence over the statements in this Policy.

1.5 Communal repairs

- 1.5.1 Communal repairs include repairs to shared areas such as entrances, halls, stairways, lifts, passageways, rubbish chutes, paths, grounds, roadways, parking areas, and communal gardens. This also includes repairs to the fabric and structure

¹ This is usually 12 or 24 months from the date of practical completion, depending on the scheme

of the building such as the roof or pipework supplying utilities, except in the case of shared ownership houses.

- 1.5.2 Some of the blocks, schemes, and estates in which we have homes are not managed directly by us. Where this is the case, a superior landlord, freeholder, or managing agent will be responsible for communal repairs. This Policy and the timescales will not apply in those circumstances.

1.6 Prioritising repairs

- 1.6.1 We'll prioritise responsive repairs that involve health or safety risks, ensuring prompt resolution within legally mandated timeframes.
- 1.6.2 We have a zero-tolerance approach to building and fire safety issues, and damp and mould in line with our Damp & Mould / Repairs & Serious Health Conditions Standard Operating Procedure. We will address these issues promptly to maintain a safe living environment. If this cannot be done right away, we will reduce the risks using different methods i.e. dehumidifiers/mould wash.
- 1.6.3 We recognise some repair issues have a potentially adverse impact on a resident with a medical vulnerability or condition. Please let us know if you have any additional needs when you contact us so we can prioritise your repair. In all instances the resident's welfare, health and safety will be our primary concern. We'll act in line with our [Reasonable Adjustments & Vulnerable Needs Policy](#).
- 1.6.4 You can escalate urgent concerns through our complaints process (see [Complaints Policy](#)) if you feel your requests are not being addressed promptly.

If a managing agent is responsible for the repairs and you wish to escalate your concerns, we will liaise with the managing agent to try and resolve the issue.

1.7 Delivering repairs

- 1.7.1 We deliver our service using a combination of direct labour operatives and contractors.
- 1.7.2 Through this Policy, we commit to meeting all health and safety standards required by law while delivering value for money.
- 1.7.3 See [Appendix 2](#) for our repair standards.

1.8 Meeting our residents' needs

- 1.8.1 We're committed to involving residents in ensuring the service meets your needs. We'll actively seek your feedback through regular surveys and resident panels. This ensures our services evolve to meet your needs.
- 1.8.2 We're committed to providing services that are inclusive and non-discriminatory, ensuring equal access for all residents, including those with disabilities, language barriers, or cultural sensitivities. We actively engage with diverse resident groups to improve services and address potential inequalities.

2.0 Reporting repairs

- 2.1 We ask you to tell us as soon as you're aware of any repairs needed in your home or the communal areas.
- 2.2 We offer multiple channels for reporting repairs, including:
- Email
 - Online customer portal
 - Via [our website](#)
 - By phone
 - In person.
- 2.3 You should always report emergency repairs by phone. If you're calling outside of office hours, you'll be directed to our out-of-hours service (available 24 hours a day through your local contact number).
- 2.4 We offer support for vulnerable residents who may require assistance in reporting repairs (e.g. in specialist care and support schemes). Additional support is available for those with disabilities or language needs. We will continuously review access to this service to ensure that it reflects the needs of our residents.

3.0 Emergency repairs

- 3.1 An emergency repair is anything causing immediate:
- Risk to the health, safety, and security of any occupants and/or visitors to your home, or
 - Damage to a property's structure, fixtures, and/or fittings.
- 3.2 Typical emergency repairs include:
- Water leaks to a water pipe or riser on the landlord side of the stopcock
 - Making safe immediately after a flood e.g. checking electrics
 - Dealing with the effect of severe storm damage on your home's structure (after the storm has passed)
 - Risk of falling masonry or structural collapse
 - Total loss of your electricity supply (excluding those caused by a power company)
 - Unsafe electrical fittings (excluding resident-owned appliances)
 - Breaches of security (e.g. broken locks or glass) to outside doors and windows to your home or a scheme/care home (*we'll board up broken glazing; replacing glazed units is your responsibility*)
 - Gas escape
 - Blocked main drains, soil pipes, or your only toilet
 - Heating loss between 31 October and 30 April
 - Heating loss for vulnerable residents at all times
 - Passenger lift breakdowns

- Personal mobility lift breakdowns where we remain responsible for repairs/servicing
- Insecure communal door access.

Note: *This is not an exhaustive list.*

- 3.3 We'll carry out works to make it safe within six hours of you reporting the emergency repair. Response times may be shorter in some types of homes (e.g. care homes).

For heating loss, we'll provide temporary alternative forms of heating if we're not able to repair the system at the first visit.

- 3.4 Sometimes other repairs may be needed to complete the job. If this is the case, we'll arrange more appointments with you. In exceptional circumstances, such as during a period of sustained adverse weather, we may need to lengthen the timescales for emergency repairs. If this is the case, we'll tell you when you make a report.

4.0 Routine repairs

- 4.1 We aim to complete most routine (non-emergency) repairs within 20 working days of them being reported. Where this isn't possible, we'll keep you informed with the reasons for the delay, for example, where specific parts are required or due to shortage of available operatives or contractors.
- 4.2 We measure the amount of time it takes from the day you report a repair through to its completion date, even if it involves more than one trade. We call this the 'end to end' time.
- 4.3 For routine (non-emergency) repairs, we offer a variety of appointment slots. Appointment options are designed to be flexible, aiming to meet the needs of all residents, particularly those with disabilities, caregiving responsibilities, or vulnerabilities.
- 4.4 We'll prioritise scheduling repairs for vulnerable residents where the repair is relevant to their additional needs.
- 4.5 There will be instances where specialist contractors have limited availability, or work volumes require a change to what we're able to offer. However, we will aim to agree the slot with you, whilst always meeting statutory and regulatory requirements.
- 4.6 When you book a non-emergency repair, we'll confirm the time and date of the appointment using your preferred communication style e.g. phone call, email, text.
- 4.7 We aim to complete all repairs in one visit. Where this isn't possible (e.g. where we need to order parts or investigate further) we'll clearly communicate:
- Why we're unable to complete the repair at the first visit
 - What we intend to do
 - What will happen next.

5.0 Repair or replacement

- 5.1 We will normally repair rather than replace individual components in your home. However, we may use our discretion to replace an item if:
- It represents better value for money, or
 - A repair would be ineffective.
- 5.2 We won't normally replace elements in good working order to match a component we've replaced. For example, we won't replace all kitchen cupboard doors because one door needs replacing. We'll seek to make a reasonable match with existing items, wherever possible.

6.0 Responsibilities

- 6.1 For our rented homes, your tenancy agreement sets out your rights and responsibilities for repairs. See [Appendix one](#) for a general guide.
- For homeowners, our respective responsibilities are detailed in your lease.
- 6.2 Before work starts, you must move or arrange to move any furniture and belongings that may be affected by a repair. If you need us to move it for you, we'll do our best to avoid damaging your items, but we'll ask you to sign a disclaimer.
- 6.3 If we accidentally damage your home while carrying out a repair, you can apply for compensation. We'll handle this in line with our [Compensation Policy](#).
- 6.4 We may recover costs from you to pay for repairs you're responsible for, or arising from:
- Deliberate, negligent, or careless acts by you, a member of your household, or any visitors to your home
 - Failure to report a repair as soon as possible which then goes on to cause further damage
 - Failure to uphold the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement
 - Any improvements you've made to your home without our permission.
- 6.4.1 You have the right to dispute repair charges through an internal review process, and if necessary, escalate to an independent arbitrator to ensure fairness and transparency.
- 6.4.2 Such repairs do not include those due to normal wear and tear. We'll assess each case individually depending on the circumstances.
- 6.5 For pre-booked repairs, it's important a responsible adult over the age of 18 is at home to let us in. Work cannot start or continue without a responsible adult present.

6.6 We ensure our contractors and operatives are trained in:

- Health and safety standards
- Fire safety
- Hazardous material handling
- Safeguarding
- Equality and diversity
- Customer service.

This aims to ensure:

- Repairs are conducted to the highest standard
- Respectful and sensitive interactions with all residents, including those with protected characteristics.

7.0 Decoration after repairs

7.1 Some repairs may affect the decoration of your home. If this happens, we'll 'make good' the area or offer you a voucher or payment contribution.

7.2 We may be unable to 'make good' if you've covered access panels, hatches, ducts, or ducting with wallpaper, tiles, carpet, wood, laminate, or other finishes. In these circumstances, we'll let you know before we start work.

8.0 Missed appointments

8.1 If you aren't at home when we attend the appointment, we'll try to reach you by phone.

We'll try to reach you using alternative numbers on our records. We'll only contact a third party if we have your permission to speak to someone other than you.

8.2 If we're unable to reach you, we'll leave a card asking you to contact us or the contractor/subcontractor. If we don't hear from you within seven days, we'll cancel the repair.

8.3 If you're unable to make an appointment, we ask you to reschedule in advance so we can give the slot to somebody else. Repeated missed appointments, particularly for critical repairs, may result in charges or other consequences e.g. court order to ensure timely repairs especially where the safety of residents, or the public or our colleagues, is potentially compromised.

8.4 In an emergency, where there is a health and safety issue or there's likely to be considerable damage to your or your neighbour's home, we'll gain access to your home in line with the law and our *Access Policy*.

8.5 We may make discretionary compensation payments if we miss an appointment (where we've not notified you beforehand) in line with our [Compensation Policy](#).

9.0 Temporary moves

- 9.1 In most cases, we'll be able to carry out works while you remain in your home. In exceptional circumstances, where we consider it essential for you to leave your home temporarily, we'll follow our [Replacement Homes Policy](#).

10.0 Quality monitoring

- 10.1 We routinely inspect/test a selection of completed responsive repairs at random. This may be a home visit, a phone call, or involve studying photos taken. This makes sure all work is of a high quality and we're getting value for money for you from our operatives and contractors.
- 10.2 When a repair is completed, we (or the contractor) may ask you to comment on the quality of the repair, rating your overall satisfaction with it. This information helps us to continuously improve our services.

11.0 Right to repair (tenants only)

- 11.1 If you are a secure tenant, you have the statutory right to repair under the [Right to Repair Regulations 1994](#).
- 11.2 If you are an assured tenant, you may have a contractual right to repair; you will need to check the terms of your tenancy agreement.
- 11.3 The right to repair gives you the right to compensation. And, in some cases, the right to carry out certain qualifying repairs that are our responsibility, where we have failed to carry out our obligations.
- 11.4 This right may only be exercised in accordance with procedures laid down by us; we'll provide you with details of these procedures upon request. We will refund you the agreed cost of any repairs carried out in accordance with these procedures.

12.0 Review

- 12.1 We will review this Policy annually, incorporating resident feedback and ensuring continuous compliance with evolving legislation and best practices.

Policy controls

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Appendix one: Repair responsibilities in rented homes

You are responsible for minor repairs and the replacement of minor items in your home. You should always check your tenancy agreement for your responsibilities as a tenant in the first instance.

This appendix doesn't apply to:

- Homeowners (our respective responsibilities are detailed in the lease)
- Residents living in shared living schemes/care homes
- Communal areas.

Your responsibilities (this list is not exhaustive and may include):

- Repairing damage caused by you, members of your household, or visitors, including broken glass
- Replacing locks and lost keys
- Replacing doorknobs, letter boxes etc. (houses only)
- Replacing broken toilet seats
- Unblocking sinks, baths, and toilets
- Replacing sink and bath plugs and chains
- Replacing electrical plugs and fuses
- Replacing light bulbs and fluorescent strips (except in shared areas like stairwells in blocks of flats)
- Filling minor cracks in plaster
- Repairing paths in back gardens, excluding access paths that are our responsibility
- Repairing existing fences shared with neighbours
- Replacing shared fences with an appropriate alternative when they cannot be repaired. We'll only consider make-safe repairs when the fence is posing a health and safety risk to a public pathway.
- Testing smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in line with manufacturers' instructions, and replacing their batteries where needed
- Replacing clothes lines (unless they are shared)
- Repairing items you have installed yourself
- Repairing your own electrical appliances
- Telephone points or individual TV aerials – (repairs to communal aerial connection points should be reported to us)
- Internal doors, handles, hinges, cupboard catches
- Trimming and/or re-hanging doors when you've put in new carpets
- Minor fixtures such as coat hooks, curtains, curtain rails, shower heads and hoses
- Repairs to your own cooker, fridge, and other white goods (including those we have gifted to you)
- Floor coverings (unless we've provided them)
- Fixtures or fittings you've provided, including additional security measures and alterations
- Maintaining your home in a good decorative order and not allowing it to fall into disrepair by deliberate damage or neglect
- Taking reasonable care of all specialist adaptation equipment.

Our responsibilities

We must keep the structure and outside of your home in a reasonable state of repair and in proper working order. This includes:

- Drains, gutters, outside pipes, and the roof
- Outside walls, outside doors, windowsills, window catches, sash cords and window frames, including any painting and decorating needed outside
- Inside walls, floors, ceilings, doorframes, but not painting and decorating inside apart from the communal spaces inside a block
- Chimneys, chimney stacks, and flues
- Front and rear paths, steps, or other access points that are our responsibility
- Brick-built garages and stores that are part of the property (but not sheds in most cases)
- Boundary walls and fences, but not those you share with neighbours.

We will also maintain any installations we have provided for supplying water, gas, or electricity, and for heating, hot water, and sanitation. This includes:

- Basins, sinks, baths, toilets, flushing systems, and waste pipes, but not plugs, chains, or toilet seats
- Electric wiring, including sockets and switches
- Central-heating systems, gas and water pipes, water heaters, showers and storage heaters, ventilation fans & ducts, fireplaces, and fires we have fitted.

We will take reasonable care to keep shared entrances, hallways, stairways, lifts, passageways, rubbish chutes and other shared areas that are our responsibility, in reasonable repair.

Buildings insurance

We're responsible for insuring the structure of your home (excluding any fixtures and fittings) and any shared areas, furniture, and laundry equipment we are responsible for.

Contents insurance

You're responsible for insuring the contents of your home and garden.

Appendix two: Repair standards

Repair standards

As part of our responsive repairs service, we'll:

- Confirm an appointment with you for as soon as possible, and, where possible, at a time that suits you (where access is needed to your home)
- Aim to complete the repair in one visit
- If it's an emergency, we'll visit to make things safe within six hours
- Remove offensive graffiti from estates within 24 hours of us becoming aware of it.

When working in your home, we'll:

- Arrive on time or let you know if we're running late
- Be polite and treat you and your home with respect
- Carry an ID card with photo
- Take care with your possessions
- Protect all surfaces near the work
- Clean up afterwards
- Leave your home secure and weather-tight, with the gas, electricity, and plumbing all working at the end of each day, wherever possible. We'll provide temporary alternatives (e.g. electric heater) if we're unable to do this.