

Housing Repairs Policy

Version control

Avoid referring to printed versions of this document. Printed versions may be out of date.

Owner/responsibility for compliance	Head of Housing Commissioning and Strategy		
Status (draft / approved & live)	Approved & live		
Version no:	Date approved:	Approved by:	Summary of changes made to each version:
1.1	11 Sept 2024	Cabinet	New policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy is to support the Council in its function as a landlord to provide effective housing management.
- 1.2 This policy outlines the Council's approach to providing repairs and maintenance services to our tenants, including emergency repairs outside of regular operating hours.
- 1.3 In developing this policy residents' and partnering agencies' views and feedback have been considered. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out.

2 Aims/objectives

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to outline our approach to providing responsive repair services. While individual tenancies, occupancy agreements, and leases specify contractual responsibilities, this document details general landlord and tenant responsibilities and expectations regarding the completion of repairs.
- 2.2 The Council aims to provide a reliable and efficient repair service that addresses our responsibilities correctly the first time, and at a mutually agreeable appointment.
- 2.3 If we cannot complete a repair during one visit, we will explain the reasons, outline the next steps, and schedule a follow-up appointment.

3 Definitions

Responsive repairs

- 3.1 These are minor repairs to our customers' homes to keep essential features functional. These repairs are referred to as responsive repairs. In certain situations, we may replace these features as needed.

Emergency repairs

3.2 An emergency repair is any problem that could be a security risk or cause harm to the tenant, family members, another person, or the property. Some examples of emergency repairs are:

- A health and safety risk, like smashed glass or an electrical hazard.
- A security risk, like a problem with the main entrance to your property such as insecure external window, door or lock.
- Total or partial loss of electric power.
- Unsafe power or lighting socket or electrical fitting.
- Total loss of water supply (not partial loss).
- Total or partial loss of gas supply.
- A blocked flue to open fire or boiler.
- No heating or hot water.
- A blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack or toilet.
- Toilet not flushing, if there is only one toilet in property.
- An uncontrollable leak from a water pipe, tank or cistern.

4 Scope

4.1 This policy applies to all tenancies granted by the Council.

5 Council responsibilities

5.1 Swindon Borough Council is responsible for repairing the following areas in our tenanted homes:

- The external structure of a home, which includes the roof, chimney, guttering, downpipes, window frames, sills, external doors, door frames, and walls.
- The Internal structure of a home, encompassing walls, floors, ceilings, and door frames.
- Heating and electrical features such as cisterns, radiators (excluding bleeding), boilers, heating ducts, water tanks, gas pipes, water pipes, electrical sockets, and wiring installed by the Council.
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide detectors.
- Fixtures and fittings installed by the Council, including kitchen cabinets, baths, basins, sinks, WCs, and showers.
- Outside the home, covering access paths, boundary walls, boundary fences, and outside drains.
- Communal areas, including communal doors, entry systems, stairways, hallways, meeting areas, communal rooms, lifts, alarms, lighting, flooring, and decorations internally. Externally, this includes lighting, drying and refuse areas, fencing, paths, tree care, and pest control in communal spaces.

6 Tenant responsibilities

6.1 Tenants are responsible for:

- Maintaining their homes and gardens by keeping them clean, tidy, and in good working condition, and preventing damage.
- Reporting repairs and allowing access to their homes.
- Handling certain repairs themselves when they are responsible, and safely able.
- Arranging insurance for the contents of their home.
- Covering the cost of repairs if damage is caused by the tenant, a family member, or a visitor. In such cases, we will bill for the repairs through our recharge process.
- Managing any adaptations or improvements made to their home. Tenants can make changes with our written permission, and they are responsible for maintaining these changes. Upon ending their tenancy, we may request removal of these alterations or improvements. More information can be found in our customer modification policy.

6.2 We will provide insurance coverage for the building itself, but not for the contents inside. It is the tenant's responsibility to arrange insurance for their personal belongings (contents).

7 Timescales

7.1 The Council aims to complete all inspections and repairs within the quickest time possible. In some instances of severe pressure on the service, it may take the Council longer to complete the repair or major repair. The Council will maintain an expected service standard online. Due to the flexible nature of providing a response repairs service, this policy provides a standard that the Council will endeavour to reach, but for the latest and current repairs timescales please see the website.

8 Inspections

8.1 To ensure repairs are completed correctly the first time, the Council may conduct an initial inspection before proceeding with the repair. A Council Operative or Surveyor may visit the home for this inspection, or call the tenant to discuss the repair request.

8.2 If an inspection is necessary, the Council aims to complete it at the earliest opportunity. Whenever possible, the Council will address the repair during the inspection.

8.3 Please note that the Council do not conduct inspections for emergency repairs, where there is a risk to the health or safety of customers or the public. Council operatives will promptly attend to emergency repairs, assess the situation, and carry out any necessary repairs or making safe without delay.

8.4 Inspections may be necessary for various types of repairs, but they are commonly utilised for:

- Work likely to involve insurance claims.
- Structural issues.
- Damp, mould and condensation problems.
- Boundary and fencing issues.
- Glazing repairs or replacements.
- Vermin infestations within the home.
- Defects in new-build homes or potential latent defects.
- Projects requiring specialized contractors.
- Occupational therapist referrals for aids and adaptations.
- Potential component replacements.
- Situations that may result in recharging costs.
- Any other complex repair needs.

9 Major works and minor projects

9.1 Occasionally through responsive repair work, the Council may identify more involved repairs or minor projects for individual homes, including:

- Building components that have unexpectedly failed before their expected lifespan, such as boilers, windows, or roofs.
- Structural repairs.
- External repairs.
- Remedial work following fire risk assessments.
- Significant issues with damp and mould.

9.2 Major repairs and minor projects typically cannot be completed in a single visit due to the need to establish measurements or specifications, order materials, engage contractors, and other necessary steps. These projects will often require more than one day to finish.

9.3 For these major works, the Council will establish specific completion targets, usually within **90 days**, and agree on this timeline with affected customers. If individual home visits are necessary, the Council will schedule appointments with our customers accordingly

9.4 Sometimes it may be appropriate to refer works onto the Council's cyclical work or planned maintenance programme. This will only take place where tenants have full use and functionality of a component within the home and typically will take place due to undesirable aesthetics and/or the age of a component.

10 Recharging

10.1 If damage to a home is caused by a tenant, their family, or visitors, we are not responsible for repairing this damage, and the Council will invoice customers for the repair costs. This does not include reasonable wear and tear/ fair use of the property.

- 10.2 If the cause of damage is unclear, the Council will arrange for an inspection by our Property Services team or another contractor to determine the cause and assess if a recharge is applicable. The Council aims to collaborate with the tenant to agree on the best course of action.
- 10.3 Recharge costs vary depending on the repair type and include the repair cost plus an administration fee. These costs are fixed, non-negotiable, and applied consistently in all cases. The Council's in-house team and contractors are required to report potential recharge situations to us, which we will investigate thoroughly. The Council take the recovery of recharge costs seriously and may pursue legal action if necessary.
- 10.4 In cases where there is an immediate safety risk to our tenants or potential damage to our homes, we may carry out necessary repairs and later invoice the tenant for the costs. Ideally, tenants will pay for repairs upfront. When a tenant is moving out, the Council will assess any outstanding repairs and inform them of associated charges if the work is not completed before their departure.

11 Approach

- 11.1 Our service hours are Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm. Repairs can be requested online [Request a housing repair | Swindon Borough Council](#) or by calling 01793 445500, emergency housing issues can be reported out of hours on 01793 445503.
- 11.2 When a tenant books a repair, the Council will offer appointment slots that accommodate their preferences, choosing from the following options:
- Full day.
 - Morning.
 - Afternoon.
 - Evening (limited trades).
 - Avoiding busy school pick-up times.
- 11.3 The Council will prioritise appointments based on the following factors (in no particular order):
- Tenant or public safety concerns.
 - Urgency and nature of the work or home situation.
 - Tenant vulnerability.
 - Tenant availability.
 - Likelihood of significant home damage.
- 11.4 If a tenant informs a colleague or contractor that they do not wish to allow access to their home, the colleague or contractor will promptly contact their manager to arrange alternative arrangements.

12 Expectations

12.1 The Council have specific expectations for our repairs colleagues and contractors when completing a repair, these state that they should:

- Treat customers with consideration and respect
- Come prepared for every appointment with the necessary tools and materials.
- Schedule appointments and communicate them to customers, avoiding unannounced visits.
- Be considerate of customers' personal circumstances, such as mobility or hearing difficulties.
- Arrive punctually for appointments.
- Maintain cleanliness, tidiness, and demonstrate consideration and respect.
- Park vehicles considerately and responsibly.
- Refrain from entering a tenant's home unless an adult is present.
- Introduce themselves, state who they work for, and show identification.
- Explain the purpose of their visit, estimated duration, and areas requiring access.
- Inquire about the issue and request tenants to show the problem area if necessary.
- Seek permission before moving any furniture or personal belongings.
- Notify neighbours or affected parties if work might impact them or communal areas.
- Minimize disruption to services; if utilities need to be shut off, provide explanations and reconnect by the end of the day.
- Maintain security by not leaving communal or fire doors open.
- Aim to complete the job in one visit whenever possible; inform customers and relevant parties if work extends beyond normal hours.
- Obtain permission before using customers' facilities (toilets, water, electricity, gas).
- Obtain agreement from the customer before leaving equipment overnight.
- Provide an explanation of completed repairs to the customer and ensure satisfaction.
- If new equipment is installed, explain its operation and leave instructions.
- Report any additional defects or issues found during the visit.
- If the repair cannot be completed in one visit, explain the next steps and arrange a convenient follow-up appointment.

12.2 The Council asks tenants to:

- Keep appointments or notify us well in advance if changes are needed – after three missed appointments and no contact, the Council may cancel the repair.
- Treat the Council's colleagues and contractors with consideration and respect.
- Refrain from smoking while colleagues or contractors are working in the home.
- Clear work areas before work begins.
- Provide access to the work area.
- Ensure children and pets are kept away during work.
- Ensure an adult is present throughout the duration of the work.

13 Monitoring and review

13.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation or regulations change.

14 Further information

14.1 Please contact Arlene Griffin, Head of Housing Commissioning and Strategy, agriffin@swindon.gov.uk for information or support in relation to this policy.