

## SECTION D

### REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

**To report repairs phone the  
Property Repairs Team  
01423 556917  
or e-mail  
PropertyServices@harrogate.  
gov.uk**

**For emergencies outside  
office hours  
08457 089190**

This Section includes:

- ◆ How to report repairs
- ◆ Emergency Repairs
- ◆ Repair priorities and timescales
- ◆ Who does the repair work
- ◆ The repairs you are responsible for
- ◆ Central heating
- ◆ Smoke alarms
- ◆ Painting
- ◆ Planned Improvements
- ◆ Decorations after improvements
- ◆ Emergencies: gas, fire, flood electric, heating breakdown, lost keys.
- ◆ Right to repair
- ◆ Home Contents Insurance
- ◆ Asbestos

#### What we aim to do?

We aim to maintain council properties in good condition and meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard by 2010. We will provide you with a quick, effective and convenient repairs service by qualified and courteous workers.

#### HOW TO REPORT REPAIRS

You should report all repairs to the Property Repairs Team either by telephone, in writing, e-mail or by calling into the office as soon as possible.

Give us as much detail as possible about the problem. Tell us how we can contact you and when we can get into your home to carry out the repair.

Please remember to give your name and address and tell us when you will be at home. You will receive a receipt for the work which will tell you which contractor will be doing the work and the date by which it should be finished in the post together with a repair satisfaction card. Please complete this after the work is finished. Your views can help us improve the repairs service.

#### Emergency Repairs

If you have a genuine emergency **outside office hours**, you can contact the Council's Emergency Team. They can only help if it is an emergency. The telephone number is 08457 089190.

## How Long Will They Take?

If complicated or major repair work is needed, the Area Clerk of Works may call at your home before ordering the work. The Clerk of Works will tell you how soon the work will be done.

REPAIR PRIORITIES AND TIMESCALES	EXAMPLES
<b>Priority E</b> (Emergencies are made safe within 4 hours with any follow up work done within 4 days.) Strictly used for emergency work to prevent danger to life or limb and/or serious damage to the property.	Burst water pipes, gas leak, loss of all electrical power within the property, blocked toilet drain, insecure property.
<b>Priority A</b> (Urgent repairs to be done within 3 working days.) Work that needs to be carried out urgently to overcome nuisance to the tenant, to prevent ongoing damage to the property and/or where there is a potential health and safety risk.	Leaking waste pipe to sink, faulty light or socket, heating not working, faulty ball valve.
<b>Priority B</b> (Repairs to be done within 10 working days.) Work that needs to be done promptly because the tenant is unreasonably inconvenienced and/or the repair problem may get worse.	Loose wash hand basin, external door sticking, kitchen cupboard loose, loose or broken roof tiles.
<b>Priority C</b> (General repairs to be done within 30 working days.) Standard work where the repair problem does not cause a high level of disturbance or inconvenience for the tenant and/or is unlikely to deteriorate further.	Renew wall tiles, repair fencing, plaster needs filling, loose kitchen worktop, loose floorboard, repair external render and pointing, windows sticking.
<b>Priority P</b> (Planned Improvement or Repair work to be done within 60 working days.) Work that is needed to achieve the Government's Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2010.	Planned improvements or major repairs to kitchens, bathrooms, heating, roofing, fencing or landscaping.

## Who Does the Repair Work?

All repairs are carried out by repairs contractors. The Clerk of Works supervises the repairs contractor and checks that the contractor's work is satisfactory by inspecting a proportion of the jobs completed.

All repairs contractors carry identification and you should ask to see it before letting them in your home. If you have any doubts ring your Neighbourhood Housing Office.

## THE REPAIRS YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR

You must take good care of your home and avoid causing damage to the property. For example, you should not do anything that will block your sink or drains. When repairs need doing you should tell your Neighbourhood Housing Office at once.

If any repairs have to be done due to damage or because you have failed to tell us about a problem, you may have to pay for them.

Your Tenancy Agreement details which repairs you are responsible for and which are the Council's responsibility. The repairs which you are responsible for include:

- Internal re-decoration
- Repairing damage by a member or visitor of the household
- Replacing lost keys
- Fitting curtain track battens
- Renewing plugs and chains to sinks, baths and basins
- Renewing electric light bulbs, tubes and starters for fluorescent light fittings, plugs and fuses
- Making good minor cracks and holes in plaster
- Renewing individual TV or radio aerials and satellite dishes; (note that permission is required from the Council before these items are installed).
- Supplying new dustbins
- Door bells (unless they are part of the electrical installation)
- Wooden sheds

Cookers, floor coverings, curtains, and most improvements or alterations that you have done, are also your responsibility.

If you have installed a gas cooker, gas heating or fire, (or any other gas appliance), you should arrange to have these serviced by a CORGI registered engineer each year.

### Communal areas

Unless you live in a warden controlled (category 2) sheltered scheme you are responsible for cleaning any shared communal stairways and halls. (see **Section E "Looking after your home and neighbourhood"**).



## GAS CENTRAL HEATING AND APPLIANCES

If you have gas central heating and/or appliances in your home, these will be serviced every year by the Council's heating contractors. This is a legal requirement and you must allow the service contractors access to your home. Faults to gas appliances can cause carbon monoxide poisoning which can lead to death. If you do not allow access to your

home the Council will take legal action against you. This could lead to a Court Order to allow us to enter your home and could even result in you losing your home. Any gas appliances installed and owned by you will **not** be serviced, but only checked for safety. You are responsible for servicing, repairing and replacing any gas appliances owned by you and providing the Council with certificates when this is carried out.

If you have difficulty understanding or working the controls contact your Neighbourhood Housing Office.

All solid fuel appliances will be checked for safety every two years.

## **SMOKE ALARMS**

Smoke alarms will be tested by the gas heating contractor each year during the visit to check the gas appliances.

It is recommended that you test the alarms yourself every week by pressing the 'test' button. You must not paint smoke alarms and you will get fewer false alarms if you keep them free of dust by using a vacuum nozzle.

## **PAINTING**

Periodically, the outside timberwork of your home will be painted. However if during the painting any items are found to require replacing these will not be repainted but will be replaced after the painting is finished. We do not paint modern materials such as plastic or galvanised steel.

## **PLANNED IMPROVEMENT WORKS TO YOUR HOME**

The Council is committed to ensuring all its tenants have a warm and well maintained home. Each year we prioritise improvement works which will ensure that tenants' homes achieve the Government's "Decent Homes Standard" by the end of 2010. To meet the Standard, a home must pass four tests which are:

1. Does it meet the minimum legal standard for housing?
2. Is it in a reasonable state of repair?
3. Does it have reasonably modern facilities and services?
4. Is it reasonably warm?

When you are offered improvement work to your kitchen or bathroom, the Council will give you a choice of colour for your kitchen units and floor and wall tiles. Other planned maintenance works include new heating systems and new roof tiles or slates.

After you have had these improvement works you will be sent a satisfaction questionnaire. We value feedback of your experiences and use this information as a measure of our success and as information to develop our planned improvement service.

## DECORATIONS AFTER IMPROVEMENTS

You are responsible for decorating the inside of your home. However, if your decorations are damaged whilst the Council is carrying out improvements you may get a decoration grant.

This grant is to assist you with the costs of purchasing decoration materials (not labour costs) and is dependent on the age and condition of your decorations. The grant is usually given as vouchers, which you can exchange for decorating materials at selected shops.

## WHAT TO DO IN EMERGENCIES

### Smell of Gas or Suspected Fumes

- **Do not** smoke or use naked flames.
- **Do not** use anything electrical such as light switches, sockets or appliances. This is also includes door entry systems and battery operated items.
- Turn the gas off at the meter and at the appliance;
- Open all your windows and doors.
- Telephone the Property Repairs Team (01423 556917) who will ask Transco to call. If the phone line is engaged (or the Property Repairs Office is closed) contact Transco on 0800 111999; let your Property Repairs Team know you have telephoned Transco. If possible, use your neighbour's telephone or a phone outside of your home for your safety.
- Please be ready to give details of the location of the leak or smell and your contact details
- Stay at or near your home until Transco arrive. If you smell gas or fumes inside your home wait for Transco outside your home. Transco will attend within 2 hours.

### Flood - Leaking Water Pipes

- Turn off your stop tap; (if your home has a leak of hot water, turn off the red gate valve (which is shaped like a wheel). The gate valve is usually near your hot water tank.
- If you cannot turn off or find the stop tap or valves, put a container or towels beneath the leak. Try turning on the taps if the leak is upstairs.
- Turn off your electricity if water is near lights or sockets.
- Telephone the Property Repairs Team on 01423 556917.. Tell them if the pipe is still leaking. A tradesman will be sent to your home as quickly as possible that same working day.

### Fire

If the smoke alarm sounds or you see or smell smoke:

- Get everyone out.
- Establish if it is a false alarm.
- If there is a fire, telephone the Fire Brigade from **outside** your home.

If you have a chip pan fire do **not** put any water on the fire or move the pan outside. Smother the fire with a fire blanket, damp cloth or damp towel.

You must contact the Property Repairs Team or your Housing Office if there has been a fire in your home.

### **Electrical Problems**

If you have power sockets that fail or your lights go out:

- Turn off the power.
- Check your consumer unit (fuse box) - keep a torch nearby at all times.
- If one of the circuit breakers is in the off position disconnect all electrical appliances. It can often be a faulty appliance such as a kettle, iron or fridge.
- If you have a fuse with a wire, find which wire has broken or turned black. Replace the wire using the correct amp rating. If you are unsure how to do this contact an electrician. If you contact the Council you will be charged for this work.
- If you have circuit breakers, find the switch that is in the "off" position, (the switch will be down or in mid way position). This may tell you which circuit the fault is in. If the switch is mid way press it all the way down before pushing it back up or just push the switch back to the "on" position and turn on your appliances one by one. You may find out in this way if any of the appliances are faulty.
- If the fuse, or the circuit breaker blows or trips again after you have checked your appliances contact the Repairs Team.

### **Heating Breakdown**

- Check the time clock and thermostat controls are set correctly.
- If you have a key meter, check there is enough credit.
- If you have an older gas boiler, check the pilot light is on. Newer gas boilers do not have pilot lights.
- If you have a modern wall mounted gas boiler with a pressure gauge, check that the pressure needle is in the green area (the gauge may be behind the flap on the front of the boiler).

If you still have a problem contact the Repairs Team.

### **Lost Keys-Locked Out**

If you have lost your keys, or locked yourself out, it is your responsibility to pay for any necessary work to break into your home e.g. changing the existing lock.

If the Council carries out the work you will have to pay for all the costs. You may ask your own joiner to break in for you, but you must always tell your Neighbourhood Housing Office if there is any damage.

## **RIGHT TO REPAIR**

If the Council does not make safe certain small urgent repairs (called qualifying repairs) within the priority periods set (see “How to Report Repairs”, page 19), you have the right to ask the Council to get another repairs contractor to do the repair. If the second repairs contractor does not do the repair in time you have the right to compensation. For full details contact the Property Repairs Team on 01423 556917. Qualifying repairs include:

- unsafe power or lighting sockets or electrical fittings
- blocked flue to open fire or boiler
- leaking roof
- toilet doesn't flush (if only one toilet in property)
- blocked sink, bath or basin
- leak from a water or heating pipe, tank or cistern
- loose/broken stair rails or handrails.

## **HOME CONTENTS INSURANCE**

The Council insures the structure of your home but not the contents. We strongly advise you to have your own home contents insurance.

The Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance plc has produced a simple, straightforward and competitively priced policy designed for council tenants. The Royal Sun Alliance can be contacted on 0345 700970. Leaflets are available at your Neighbourhood Housing Office.

## **ASBESTOS**

Up until the 1970s, asbestos was used in house construction and was particularly useful as a heat resistant material for fire protection. These materials are safe providing they remain intact; they can only represent a danger if asbestos fibres get into the air and are breathed in. Some of the Council's properties contain asbestos materials in the gutters and downpipes, shelving or backing to boiler cupboards and surrounding baths and basins.

If you are carrying out any improvements to your home and are unsure about whether you have asbestos products, please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Office before starting work and we will be happy to advise you. Remember you should always have the Council's permission before carrying out any improvements.

We will tell you if the Council's Contractors are going to do any work that may involve asbestos. The Contractors will make sure that you and your family are kept safe during the works and will inform you when the work is complete.

If you are concerned about asbestos in your home, please contact the Property Repairs Team, where staff will be happy to provide you with further information and advice.