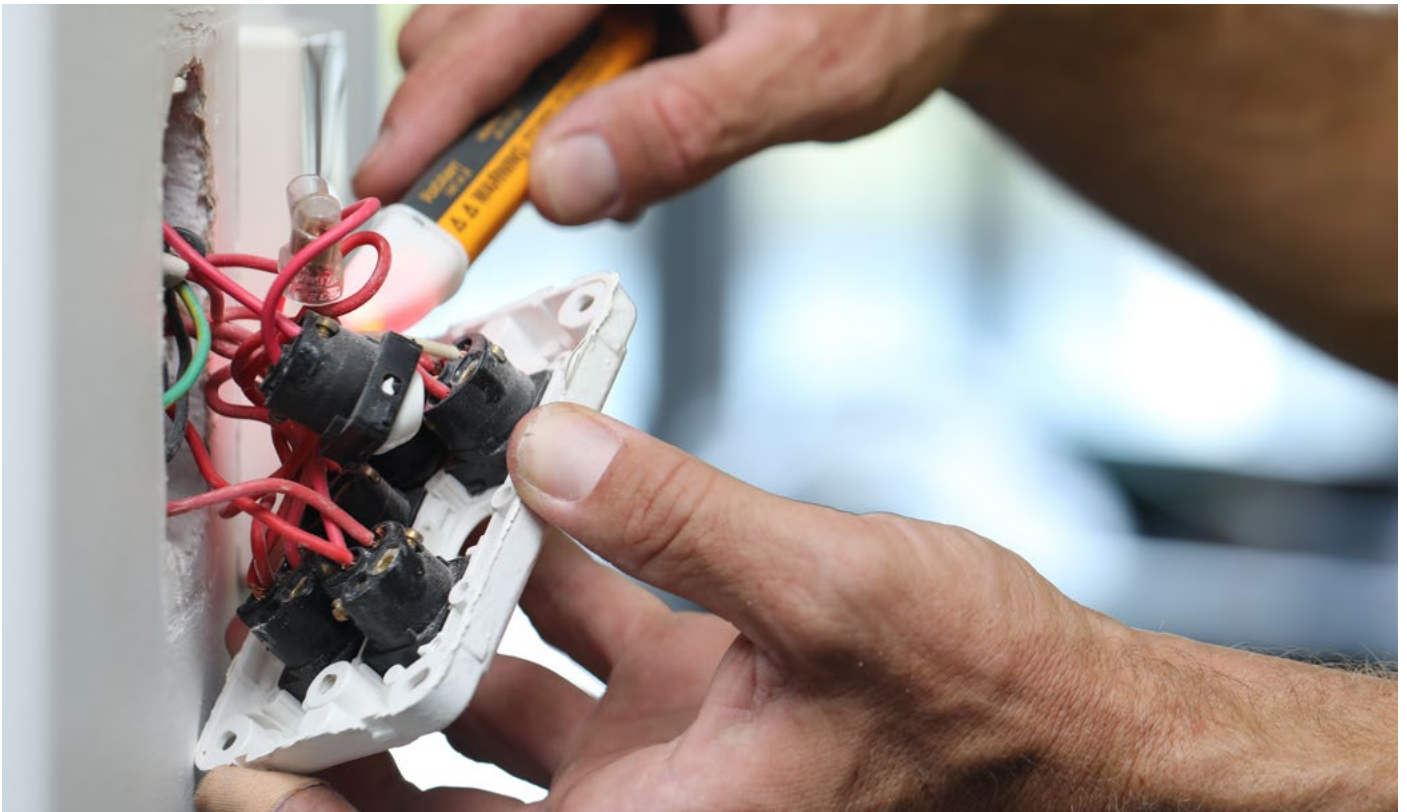


# Responsive Repairs & Maintenance Policy – Leaseholder version

Stevenage Borough Council 2024



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# This policy explains how the Council manages repair requests for leaseholders and communal areas. It explains how the service can improve and who is responsible for different repairs.

This policy covers repairs in council-owned homes and communal areas. It does not include gas checks, fire safety, or planned maintenance. These are done by other services. The Council is responsible for most communal and structural repairs, while leaseholders are responsible for repairs inside their homes.

## Policy

The Council listens to leaseholders and wants them to share their views on services. The main goal of this policy is to keep homes safe and in good condition while following legal rules. Community feedback helped create this policy.

### 1. Repairs Responsibilities

The council does all communal repairs in estates and blocks. This includes:

- The structure and exterior of the block, such as the roof.
- Shared areas, like hallways and entrances.
- Shared services, including water tanks, plumbing, and electricity.
- Drainage systems, gutters, and soil pipes.
- Outside areas, including estate walls and shared fences.

You must maintain the inside of your home. This includes:

- Fixing cisterns, tanks, pipes, and wires that serve only your home.
- Maintaining stoptaps between the mains supply and your home.
- Caring for non-structural walls, doors, and frames inside your home.
- Managing plaster, tiling, and other wall and ceiling surfaces.
- Looking after heating or hot water systems that only serve your home.

- Ensuring water from overflow pipes doesn't damage the building's structure.

You also need to:

- Report structural problems in the building and any issues in your home that can harm other homes or the building.
- Report repairs in communal areas or for shared heating systems.
- Cover the costs of fixing leaks from your home that affect others.
- Make sure any water from your home doesn't damage the building. If you fail to fix issues on time, the council may do the repairs and charge you.
- Check if a repair has already been made before you report it. This can be done on your Housing Online account.

Our specialist teams manage repairs depending on the type of work (regular maintenance or part of planned works). You are responsible for repairs that are your responsibility in a reasonable time.

When doing repairs in communal areas or estates, the council makes sure disruption is not caused and the area is left clean afterward. In some cases, larger repairs may need:

- Temporarily cutting off services to the estate or block.
- Temporarily stopping access to some areas.
- Redirecting access or pipes if needed.

You must pay your share of repair and maintenance costs for the building and communal areas, as mentioned in your lease. More details are available on the Council's website:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/leaseholders/your-leaseholder-service-charges/your-leaseholder-service-charges-explained>

The council will review repeated repairs, taking into account warranties and defects. The council will work with other Council services to fix any ongoing issues.

## Leaseholder Repairs – Building’s Insurance

In some cases, the Council’s buildings insurance might cover your repair. After someone checks the problem, the repair could be done by the Repairs service, another Council team, or an outside company through the insurance.

Your flat is insured under a block policy. If the repair involves communal areas or the estate, report it to the Council to avoid wrong charges. For other claims, contact the insurance provider. You can find more information on:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/leaseholders/leaseholder-buildings-insurance> or contact the Resident and Estates Services.

If a communal or estate needs repair because of vandalism or criminal damage, you should report it within 90 days and give us a crime reference number from the police.

Not all repairs are covered by the Council or buildings insurance. It’s a good idea that you get a contents insurance for items not part of the building structure. Information about the Council’s home contents insurance plan is on the website: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/home-contents-insurance>.

## Leaseholder - Leaks

If you find a leak that seems to come from another home, you should first talk to the neighbour to find and stop the leak. If the neighbour’s home is a Council property, the tenant should us right away so the council can act. You should also report the leak to us, giving details about the possible cause and the home involved. You can also contact our building insurer for advice.

If the council tell you a leak is coming from your home into another, you must quickly fix the issue and let the Resident and Estates Services know or your plans to fix it. If you don’t, the council may access your home and turn off the water supply. You will be responsible for the repair costs, including damage from forcing entry.

If the council must force entry to stop a leak, the council won’t be responsible for repairing any door or fixture damage caused by it. You must fix the leak before turning on the water supply.

## 2. Reporting a responsive repair

You must report any damage or disrepair to Council property and communal areas. This includes criminal damage, neglect, accidental damage, and wear and tear. The easiest way is through the **Housing Online - My Repairs** account. If not possible, you can contact the Council’s Customer Service Centre.

The Repairs service will look into repair requests that involve the building structure, communal areas, and estate services. Before reporting, you should check if a repair order is already open to avoid duplicates. These could mean extra charges.

### Emergency Repairs:

- During normal hours (Mon-Fri, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM), call 01438 211011 or 0800 1123444.
- For urgent issues outside these hours, including weekends and holidays, call the out-of-hours service at 01438 314963.

## 3. Who can report a responsive repair?

Leaseholders, family members, or someone you’ve allowed to speak for you (with written permission) can report repairs for communal areas and the estate.

## 4. Repairs Priorities and Timescales

The council handle repairs based on how urgent they are:

- Emergency Repairs: Fixed within 24 hours.
- Urgent Repairs: Fixed within 5 working days.
- Routine Repairs: Fixed within 20 working days.

If you give false information or miss appointments, you may be charged. You can track the repairs in your block, including open and pending jobs, through your Housing Online account.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

## 5. Ensuring the service meets customer's needs

The council are committed to making sure everyone can access the repairs service. This follows the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act (2010) and the Council's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy (2022-2026).

## 6. Appointments

Appointments aren't needed for emergency repairs. Appointments are not offered for communal repairs. These will be done based on their priority and timeframe.

When the council might move an appointment:

- There's more work needed than first thought and requires more time.
- Another emergency needs urgent attention and possibly more operatives.
- Bad weather affecting safe travel.
- No available staff.
- Restrictions by national or regional government.

## 7. Allowing access

The council does not do repairs or maintenance within your home; this is your responsibility. You should refer to your lease for more guidance.

The council and our representatives have the right to enter your property after giving you written notice to carry out our responsibilities under the lease. If you don't allow access, you can breach the lease terms, and the council will notify the Resident and Estates team. They will take the action needed.

In serious situations like fire or flood, the council might force entry your home without notice if the council can't contact you to prevent danger to people or property. The council will let the Resident and Estates Services know and possibly the Emergency Services. Your home will be secured after this, and you will be responsible for any charges, including any repairs needed.

You must make sure your contact details are correct so the council can communicate with you in an emergency.

## 8. Missed appointments

Sometimes unexpected situations may require work or resources to be redirected. This may mean an appointment being missed or rescheduled on short notice. In such cases, the council will contact you as soon as possible to set a new date. If the council can't reach you, the council may move the appointment without further notice.

The council can't compensate for rescheduling if it is issues out of our control. But if the council fail to keep an appointment without a valid reason, the council will offer you compensation.

The council will keep track of missed appointments. If you are not home or don't give access, this is a breach of your responsibilities. The council may apply a charge for the missed appointment.

## 9. Charges and upfront payments

The council are responsible for:

- Identifying work that will result in charges to you.
- Providing you with the costs for this work.
- Sharing the cost details with the Residents and Estates Services and the Income Services team to recover the costs.

For more information on chargeable repairs and upfront payments, you can check to the Council's Housing Income policy.

The council will track repairs for each property and block. This helps to:

- Identify homes that need extra repairs or maintenance to prevent frequent problems.
- Spot blocks with more repair than usual.
- Find cases where the tenant's actions (or no action) may be causing repairs.
- Create plans to lower repair and maintenance costs.

You must pay a share of the total costs for repairs and maintenance of the structure and exterior of your block, communal area and the estate. This information is included in your lease. The council are responsible for recovering the cost from you when repairs or maintenance work is completed.

#### **10. When a repair request can be denied**

The council may deny a repair if it is already part of a planned or major works, and there is no risk to you until the work is done.

#### **11. Use of specialist contractors**

The council may hire contractors to complete repairs. They are considered an extension of the Repairs service, and they will carry ID to show their role. If you have any concerns or feedback about the contractors or their work, you can report it to us or through the Council's compliments and complaints system.

#### **12. Notifying leaseholders**

When the council plan to carry out work or a service that you must pay for, the council will issue a Section 20 notice (S20). The consultation process has three stages:

- First Stage: you are notified of our intention to carry out the work.
- Second Stage: you will receive details of the cost for the work.
- Third Stage: the council will let you know who the council have hired to do the work (if applicable).

This process makes sure you are informed and involved in the planning and cost-sharing of major works.

#### **13. Quality Control**

The council does random post-inspections of repairs to monitor service quality. If you believe that the work is below standard, you can request a post-inspection from us.

#### **14. Customer Satisfaction**

The council will regularly ask you for feedback on the service. This feedback is important for improving service delivery. The council collects this in different ways: phone calls, text messages, emails and face-to-face.

#### **15. Complaints**

If you're unhappy with the service, you can file a complaint on the Council's website at [www.stevenage.gov.uk](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk).

## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Fencing Policy

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

## Version History

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author
January 2024	Creation	Ana Hetherington