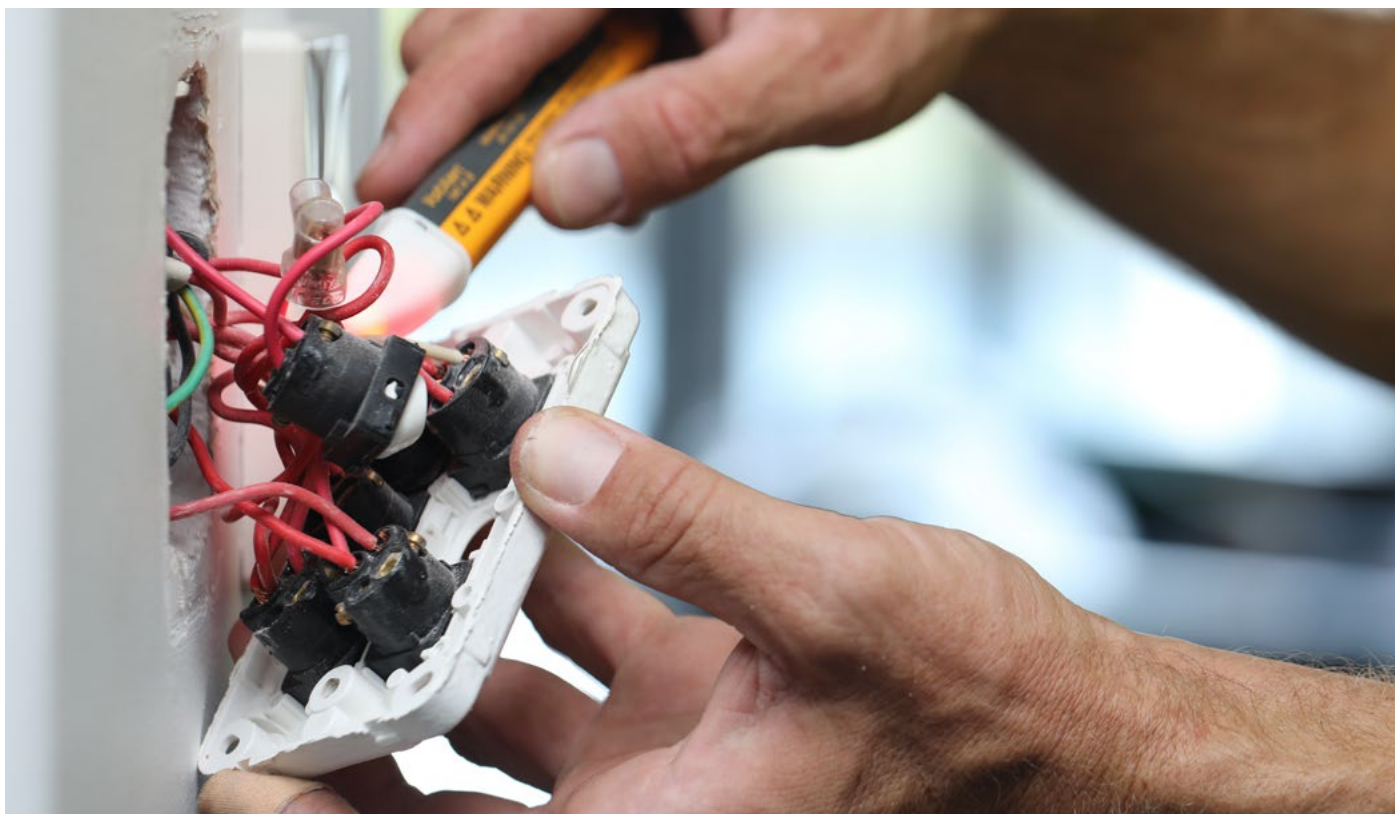


Responsive Repairs & Maintenance Policy – Tenant version

Stevenage Borough Council 2024



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Owner	Assistant Director for Building Safety and Housing Property Services
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Author	Asset Management Co-ordinator
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For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

This policy explains how the Council manages repair requests for tenants 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 shared areas and building repairs.

Policy

1. Repairs Responsibilities

The council does certain repairs, while you are responsible for others. Here's a general guide:

Repair	Details	SBC	Tenant
Baths and basins	Sanitary ware, plumbing connections, bath seals, tiling around the bath	✓	
Bathroom fixtures and fittings	Toilet seats, bathroom cabinets, mirrors, shower curtains, unheated towel rails, toilet holders, plugs, chains		✓
Blockages	Bath, basins and toilets isolated within council homes		✓
Blockages	Where blockages occur outside of homes or are directly affecting council homes	✓	
Boilers	Annual servicing and breakdown	✓	
Ceilings		✓	
Communal areas	Including lighting, doors, door locks, door entry phones, bin stores, recycling areas, cleaning, lifts, communal heating, and ground maintenance	✓	
Decoration	External	✓	
Decoration	Internal		✓
Entrance door (front and back)	Including frame and door and draught excluders	✓	
Entrance door locks	Including loss of keys and repairs to forced entry if you get locked out		✓
Internal doors	Repairing or replacing door and/or frames	✓	
Door furniture	Including handles, letterboxes and door bells		✓
Drains	Outside, blocked or damaged within the property boundary	✓	
Electric appliances	Such as cookers, fridges, washing machines and dishwashers		✓
Fences and gates	Where provided by SBC in line with the Fencing Policy.	✓	
Fixtures and fittings	Such as coat hooks, curtains, curtain rails		✓
Flat blocks main and rear entry door	Both manual and electronic	✓	
Floorboards and subfloors	Floorboards and latex levelling of hard floors	✓	
Floor coverings	Including adapting floors to accommodate carpets		✓
Garden to individual home	Including turf, repairs or replacement of dustbins/wheelie bins and recycling refuse areas, trees and shrubs		✓
Garages	Attached garages only (excluding garage blocks)	✓	
Glazing	Only if broken into, tenant must get a crime reference number, or accidentally caused by Council or contractors		✓

Repair	Details	SBC	Tenant
Gutters	Repairs with clearing and cleaning subject to the cyclical maintenance policy.	✓	
Heating	Including solar thermal or PV panels	✓	
Hot water heaters	Including immersion heaters	✓	
Infestations	Including cockroaches, mice, rats or bedbugs and squirrels (treatments for these types of pests are free of charge for council tenants)	✓	
Infestations	Treatment for all other pests not mentioned above are chargeable		✓
Infestations	Where pests are affecting homes from neighbouring properties or communal areas, these will be investigated and remedied on a case-by-case basis	✓	
Kitchen units	Including worktops	✓	
Light fittings	Light bulbs, fuses, pull cords and fluorescent tubes (including bulbs in sealed units)		✓
Paths	Including path repairs, steps, footpaths and ramps	✓	
Pilot lights	Including resetting any heating controls		✓
Plastering	Including making good post repair works	✓	
Plumbing repairs and leaks	Including outside pipes	✓	
Porches		✓	
Roofing and outside walls	Ensuring the property is weatherproof and watertight	✓	
Showers	Where provided by SBC only.	✓	
Stairs	Including banister, handrail and staircases	✓	
Switches and sockets		✓	
Telephone points			✓
TV aerial points	In tenant owned properties only. SBC responsible for communal lounges		✓
Ventilation systems	Including heat recovery systems and mechanical extraction fans.	✓	
Wall tiling	Including patch repairs and making good post repairs works	✓	
Washing lines	Including rotary lines (unless in communal areas)		✓
Water leaks	Including sealant around sinks and bath	✓	
Windows	Including windowsills, sash cords, catch and frames	✓	

2. Reporting a responsive repair

You must report any damage or disrepair to your home 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. 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?

Tenants, family members, or someone you've allowed to speak for you (with written permission).

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.

When a repair is reported, the service decides what type of work is needed and sets a priority. A worker is then sent to check and fix the problem.

If you give false information or miss appointments, you may be charged.

The council may temporarily change repair times in certain situations, like after extreme weather that causes more repairs (such as fencing or guttering). If there are delays, you will be told, usually within 5 working days, and given a new date.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

5. Emergency repairs

An emergency repair is addressed within 24 hours if it meets any of the following conditions:

- There is a likely health or safety risk.
- There is a possible risk to the property's structure or fittings.
- There is a risk of severe hardship if the issue isn't resolved, or other facilities aren't provided.

Examples of emergency repairs include:

- An insecure ground-floor window, door, or lock.
- Total loss of electric power.
- Unsafe power or lighting socket.
- An uncontrollable leak from a water or heating pipe, tank, or cistern.
- Complete loss of water supply.
- A blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack, or a toilet when no other toilet is available.
- Total or partial loss of heating or hot water between October 31 and May 1 in homes without gas heating.

The goal of an emergency repair visit is to eliminate the danger and, if possible, repair the issue during the visit. If the council need to do more work, it will be done as either Urgent or Routine, depending on its nature.

6. Emergency out-of-hours repairs

The Out of Hours service is available from 5:00 PM to 9:00 AM for repairs that have an risk to you or your home and can't wait until the next day. If the repair is an emergency, the council will make it safe.

If it's not an emergency, you will be told to contact the Repairs service during normal working hours (starting at 9:00 AM).

If more work is needed after the emergency repair, it will be scheduled as either Urgent or Routine.

If the repairs can't be made safe immediately (such

as during bad weather), basic advice will be given. You can call back if things get worse.

If your home is unsafe, the council may move you to temporary accommodation, which could be a hotel, if available. This will follow the Council's Decant Policy.

You may be required to pay if you misuse the Out of Hours service. Examples of misuse:

- Reporting non-emergency repairs as emergencies to get quicker service.
- Regularly reporting avoidable issues.
- Not being home when the operative arrives.
- Using the service to skip normal hours.
- Concerns about welfare or behaviour toward staff.

7. Urgent repairs

An Urgent repair is when the problem can cause serious discomfort to you or possible damage to your home if not fixed. These repairs are usually fixed within 5 working days. Examples include:

- Partial loss of electric power or water supply.
- Total or partial loss of electric heating or hot water (from May 1 to October 31) in properties without gas heating.
- Blocked sink, bath, or basin.
- A toilet that won't flush (if it's the only one in the home).
- A tap that can't be turned.
- Loose or detached banister or handrail.
- Rotten timber flooring or stair tread.
- Some window repairs to secure the property.
- A leaking roof or a non-working mechanical extractor fan in an internal kitchen or bathroom.

8. Routine repairs

Routine repairs are for minor issues and don't impact your safety or home. These repairs are usually fixed within 20 working days. Examples include: adjusting windows or doors; repairing or replacing bath panels; gate and fence repairs; fixing blown or misted windows.

9. Right to Repair

You have the right to have some small repairs done for free under the Right to Repair law. For more information, visit: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/repairs/right-to-repair>

10. Ensuring the service meets customer's needs

The council know you or your family members may need extra help with repairs. The council can make changes based on your needs. You can ask for these changes in person, by email, mail, or phone. Examples of adjustments include:

- Letting a representative join when meeting with the Council.
- Providing aids like hearing loops or adapted software.
- Offering interpreters, such as British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters.
- Printing documents in large print, braille, or easy read.
- Allowing you to give details over the phone or in-person instead of online or on paper.

The council is 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).

11. Appointments

Appointments aren't needed for emergency repairs. You or a representative (18 years or older) must stay at the property to give access and stay until the repair is finished or made safe.

Appointments are not offered for communal repairs. These will be done based on their priority and timeframe.

For urgent and routine repairs the available time slots (excluding Bank Holidays) are:

- AM: Monday to Friday, 08:00 – 13:00
- PM: Monday to Friday, 12:00 – 16:00
- School Run: Monday to Friday, 09:30 – 14:30

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.

12. Allowing access

You must allow workers to access your home for repairs, safety checks and inspections. If you don't, you can break your Tenancy Agreement.

Operatives and contractors must show ID before entering your home.

Young children and pets need to be kept away from the repair area while work is being done.

In emergencies, like severe water leaks or unsafe electrics, the council may enter your home without notice, even if you are not home. If the council need to force entry to your home, the council will secure it afterward, but may charge you for the cost of forcing entry.

If the council's officers are harassed, abused, or threatened, they have the right to leave the property immediately. The council takes these incidents seriously and may involve the police or other authorities.

13. 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.

You can reschedule or cancel appointments up until the day of the appointment, but you must let us know so the council can make the changes.

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

The council 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.

- If you miss an appointment, the council's officer will try to contact you. If they can't reach you or if you can't give access, the council officer will take photos as proof and leave a card at your home.
- The repairs order will then be closed. It is your responsibility to raise the repair again if the work is still needed.

You must make sure your contact details are correct when reporting a repair so the council can communicate with you.

14. Charges and upfront payments

The council is responsible for:

- Identifying work that will result 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.

If you can't afford a repair you are responsible for, you should contact the Income Services team for advice. Depending on the situation, the council might be able to arrange payment in instalments. Once payment is set, the council can then do the repair.

If you can't afford a repair that is a risk to you or property, the council may step in to make the area safe. You will be charged a standard fee for the visit and the cost of the work, including VAT. Payment will be made through the Income Services team.

You are responsible for repairs caused by accidental damage, misuse, or neglect by anyone in your home or visitors. If the repair is not due to normal wear and tear, you will be charged. Will will let you know of costs, and direct you to Income Services payment. Information on charges is available on the Council's website.

The council don't charge for repairs in these situations:

- Damage by domestic violence unless the person responsible is a tenant.
- Damage from a violence to you or your family by an outsider, reported within 30 days, with a crime reference number.
- Damage from a hate crime against you or your family by an outsider, reported within 30 days, with a crime reference number.
- Cracked or damaged windows, door frames, or fixtures caused by a break-in or burglary, reported within 30 days, with a crime reference number.
- Certain accidental damage covered by the Council's buildings insurance.

15. When a repair request can be denied

The council may deny a repair if:

- The repair is already part of a planned or major works, and there is no risk to you until the work is done.
- You are in the Right to Buy process.
- There's an abandonment notice.
- You are refusing access for the annual gas safety service.

16. 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.

17. Quality Control

The council do 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.

18. Customer Satisfaction

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

19. Complaints

If you're unhappy with the service, you can file a complaint on the Council's website at 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