

Wheatley Homes South Repairs and Maintenance Policy

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Customer engagement required	Yes
Trade union engagement required	No
Equality Impact Assessment	As required on service delivery/approach

Policy Statement

As part of Scotland's largest housing and care provider, we recognise that an effective repairs and maintenance service is one of the most important services we provide to our customers.

We will continue to evolve to deliver on customer priorities. More importantly, customers will have more control and choices over their service delivery and have a service which is built around them.

Our Repairs and Maintenance Policy, establishes the approach to repairing and maintaining our homes. Providing a value for money repairs and maintenance service, that is both responsive and of the highest technical competence, is one of our core priorities. We are committed to meeting our repairs and maintenance responsibilities and will achieve this by delivering reactive repairs and planned maintenance services which are timely, efficient, effective and convenient for all our customers.

All our repair work will be undertaken in accordance with our commitment to sustainability and takes account of the wider economic and social impacts of the policy on individuals, households, local communities and the environment.

Our repairs and maintenance policy is designed to ensure a repairs and maintenance service with customers at its heart, whilst ensuring compliance with legislation and regulations. Our flexible approach to delivery will ensure that the needs of our most vulnerable customers are taken into account.

We will deliver reactive repairs, planned maintenance and improvement works through our in-house repairs team. Where we do not have the required skills to complete the work or where employing a contractor demonstrably delivers better value for money, we may use Third party contractors. Our service delivery partners and contractors are expected to work within the spirit of the Group Sustainability Plan and to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability in accordance with their sustainability policies.

A copy of this Policy is available to all interested parties via the Wheatley Group and WH South websites. We will also provide this policy on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, translated or on another non-written format.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Wheatley Homes South (WHS) is the second largest Registered Social Landlord in Scotland owning and managing over 10,000 homes across Dumfries and Galloway.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy is to set out the general operating principles covering all of the repairs activities undertaken by WHS. It sets out the responsibilities to manage the repairs service and the general arrangements to support compliance. It supersedes the previous Repairs and Maintenance Policy and links to other policies, plans, frameworks and strategies.

2. Service Delivery

- 2.1 We work with our customers to continually improve our repairs and maintenance service, giving our customers greater control over how their service is delivered.
- 2.2 We are committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination. Therefore, we will continue to develop and deliver a repairs service that meets the needs of each individual and ensures no customer is left behind.
- 2.3 Our repairs and maintenance service will be delivered through our in-house repairs team. Where we do not have the required skills to complete the work or where employing a contractor demonstrably delivers better value for money, we may use Third party contractors

3. Principles, Aims & Objectives

3.1 Our principles:

- 3.1.1 We are committed to providing high-quality homes, properties and neighbourhoods for our customers to live, work and feel safe. We aim to deliver a high quality, customer focussed repairs and maintenance service. The following section explains how we will achieve this.

3.2 Our Aims:

- All customers feel in **control** and **have choices** about **when** they receive our repairs and maintenance service at a time that is convenient for them;
- Customers live in a **safe and secure environment**;
- We will deliver **efficient, effective and value for money** services that meet the needs of all of our customers; and
- **Provide assurance and minimise disruption** to our customers while complying with relevant legislation, regulatory requirements and meeting our contractual obligations.

3.3 Our Objectives:

- We will provide services which are **easily accessible 24/7**, in a way that **suits our customers** whilst delivering high standards of customer care;
- **Work in partnership with customers** as part of our 'My Repairs' initiative to continuously drive service improvements;
- At all times **focus on the customer** experience by delivering high standards of **customer care** and **high satisfaction rates**;
- Ensure our **customers understand their responsibilities** for looking after their homes;
- Keep our customers' homes in **good condition and free from damp and mould**;
- Minimise disruption to customers by **completing repair works at the first visit** whenever possible;
- Keep all installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity, sanitation, space and water heating in **good repair and working order**;
- **Maintain** entrances, halls, lifts, stairways, passageways, lighting, door entry systems and other **parts provided for common use**;
- Ensuring that **fire protection systems** and **firefighting equipment** are compliant with legislation, regularly inspected and serviced; and
- Take cognisance of the impact of the **time to achieve consent** for investment where owners require to be consulted.

4. Landlord & Tenant Responsibilities

- 4.1 A summary of our responsibilities and those of our customers are set out in this section with reference to the legal frameworks we operate within.

Landlord

- 4.2 We have a legal duty to repair and maintain our properties for social rent. We will carry out certain repairs to these properties including, but not limited to repair to:
- The structure (including chimneys, roofs, walls, floors and stairs);
 - External fabric repairs (windows, gutters, downpipes, external doors);
 - The plumbing system (water tanks, pipe works, stop cocks);
 - Heating and hot water systems;
 - Gas pipes, electrical wiring, sockets, light fittings, switches and hard-wired smoke & heat detectors;
 - Kitchen and bathroom fittings (cupboards, worktops, toilets, baths and basins);
 - Doors and surrounds (skirting boards, facings and handles);
 - Bin areas and washing poles;
 - Door entry systems;
 - Shared areas;
 - Lifts and common stairs; and
 - Access paths.

Tenants

- 4.3 Under their tenancy agreements tenants of properties for social rent are generally responsible for minor repairs such as:
- repairing any minor fixtures and fittings such as curtain rails, light bulbs and plugs;
 - small repairs like replacing keys;
 - maintaining internal decoration; and
 - maintaining and/or replacing floor coverings supplied as part of the investment programme.
- 4.4 We recognise that some tenants may need extra support to live independently in their homes. Where it has been identified that a tenant has a vulnerability or need that would require a prioritised response or directly impacts their ability to carry out a repair, our **‘Think Yes’** approach gives our housing staff discretion to order repairs tailored to individual tenant requirements.
- 4.5 In addition, where we identify tenants who are having difficulties keeping their properties in good condition e.g., hoarding, we can offer additional services to support the tenant to maintain their tenancy.
- 4.6 We will encourage tenants wishing to carry out work in their properties beyond their general responsibilities, provided they obtain written permission from us in advance.
- 4.7 We will generally grant permission if we are satisfied that:
- the work will be carried out to a sufficiently high standard, using materials of a suitable quality;
 - the work will be carried out by a qualified person;
 - the work won’t impact neighbouring properties; and
 - the tenant has obtained any necessary statutory consents.
- 4.8 After the tenant’s works have been completed, we may inspect the works to confirm that the works have been undertaken in line with the agreed scope and standards. We will also require a copy of any completion certification from the local authority.
- 4.9 Tenants may be charged for repairs where a repair becomes necessary as a result of the wilful, negligent or accidental actions of the tenant’s household.

5. Repairs Service Standards

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 We have established definitions and timescales to deliver the repairs and maintenance service, many of which are governed by legislation and/or good practice.
- 5.1.2 All our repair and maintenance work will be undertaken in line with our commitment to sustainability. It also takes account of wider economic and social impacts of the policy on individuals, households, local communities and the environment.

5.2 Reporting Repairs

- 5.2.1 Customers can report repairs by phone through our Customer First Centre; by post; or in person through contacting any of our frontline service delivery teams working in communities. Development work is also being planned so that customers will be able to report repairs online through WHS customer accounts.
- 5.2.2 We will accept repair requests from customers, residents, members of their household, and other individuals supporting them and authorised to act on their behalf. To be authorised, our Group mandate template must be completed and recorded on our system.
- 5.2.3 Our employees can also report repairs on behalf of tenants.
- 5.2.4 Some repair and maintenance work may require a pre-inspection to assess what is required before work can be arranged and an appointment agreed. In such circumstances, we will attempt to arrange both the pre-inspection and repair works appointments within the timescales set out in section 5.4.

5.3 Access

- 5.3.1 When a customer reports an internal repair, they will be asked for a preferred method of contact (such as a **mobile number** and/or, their **email address**) and a suitable time when they will be able to provide access.
- 5.3.2 We will manage appointments through Book It, Track It, Rate It and this provides customers with confirmation of their appointment details as well as follow up texts in advance of the appointment.
- 5.3.3 Where our repairs partner or a sub-contractor attends to carry out a repair and cannot gain access, they will leave a card giving contact details and asking the customer to make contact to re-arrange access.
- 5.3.4 Customers of all properties are required under the terms of their tenancy agreement to allow us as their landlord, access to their home to inspect, carry out repairs, or do other works that are necessary to their property or adjoining properties.
- 5.3.5 As a last resort, where we have a statutory obligation to carry out works, or where there is an emergency, we reserve the right to force entry.

5.4 Repairs & Maintenance Categories

A) Emergency Repairs

- 5.4.1 A repair is considered to be an emergency where there is a threat to the **health and safety** of our customers or where we need to take quick action to **prevent damage** to one of our properties.
- 5.4.2 Unless there is a threat to health and safety or a need to prevent immediate damage to one of our properties, all repairs will be appointed at a time that suits the customer.

5.4.3 For emergency repairs we will:

- aim to have a tradesperson attend within an average of **3 hours** and no more than **6 hours** to initially make safe any emergency; and
- any follow-on repairs will then be arranged with the customer.

5.4.4 Repairs reported **out with normal working** hours will be attended to out with normal working hours **only when there is a serious risk to the customer's health and safety** or there is a **serious risk to the structure of the property** or where the property is not secure.

5.4.5 We will deliver an emergency repairs service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for all our customers.

B) Non- Emergency Repairs

5.4.6 We will offer customers a convenient wide range of next-day and flexible appointment slots for non-emergency repairs.

- **Internal Repairs** - where the repair is internal to our customers home, we will offer an appointment slot that suits their needs.
- **External Repairs** – where the repair is external, and we do not require access we will liaise with customers to establish a mutually agreeable appointment time.

5.4.7 We aim to complete non-emergency repair works within **15 working days**. There are however some repair works that are more complex in nature or require materials to be ordered and which therefore will require longer to complete. The length of time required to complete these more complex appointed repairs will vary depending on the volume and type of work required but generally we would expect to complete these types of repairs within **30 working days**. Most importantly, we will keep our **customers informed** of the progress of the work **throughout the process**.

5.5 Cyclical Maintenance

5.5.1 Carrying out cyclical maintenance at regular intervals ensures that we achieve value for money through cost efficiencies and reduced waste set against the costs and inconvenience to the customer of reactive repairs when things go wrong.

5.5.2 We will undertake cyclical maintenance of our properties to deal with the gradual deterioration of the property and its components and finishes. For reasons of economy or efficiency, cyclical maintenance may be grouped in a programme of work.

5.5.3 Throughout the process we will keep our customers informed of the progress of the work. Appointments to carry out the work will be made to suit the needs of the customer.

5.6 Adaptations

- 5.6.1 In order to enhance the quality of life for our customers who may have a disability and live in our properties for social rent, our social landlords will support and assist in the execution of works which will enable independent living, where it is both appropriate and technically viable to do so.
- 5.6.2 We will undertake adaptation work in accordance with protocols agreed with the Local Authority. Further details on the specialist advice and support available from Local Authority Partners Occupational Therapist Services, on alternative ways to carry out tasks or through the provision of adaptations their home, are available by contacting the Local Authority. All adaptation works undertaken will follow on from an Occupational Therapist assessment and comply with best practice and statutory requirements.
- 5.6.3 The very nature of adaptation work means that they can vary in size on complexity on a job-by-job basis. However, we will aim to have an overall average completion time of no greater than **25 days**.
- 5.6.4 Detailed and accurate records about adapted properties will be maintained to enable the implementation of appropriate maintenance regimes and to enable informed decisions to be made about their future allocation to other customers requiring an adapted home.
- 5.6.5 We will only refuse adaptive work in exceptional circumstances including:
- Where the location of the property or property layout and type makes it unsuitable for the long-term use of the customer requesting the adaptation;
 - Suitable alternative accommodation can be made available which suits our customers' requirements;
 - Where the proposed adaptation is technically difficult to achieve without detriment to the property or other customers;
 - Where the proposed work does not comply with statutory requirements; and
 - Where advice received from relevant partnering agencies is that the proposed adaptation would not be appropriate.
- 5.6.6 Adaptations are funded through grant provision through the Scottish Government and some adaptation works may be delayed or held pending the provision of sufficient levels of grant funding.

5.7 Statutory/Regulatory Compliance

- 5.7.1 We will ensure that we fully comply with our legislative and regulatory compliance when delivering our repairs and maintenance service. We will provide compliance solutions for all aspects of mechanical, electrical and building fabric maintenance, and will, where necessary, force access to ensure vital compliance works are carried out. The detail of our approach to managing compliance is set out in the Group Compliance manual.

A) Gas Safety

- 5.7.2 We have a statutory obligation to carry out gas safety checks on any gas appliance in our homes each year and our approach to carrying these checks out is documented separately in our Gas Safety Management Arrangements. To deliver this vital service it is important that customers provide access to their homes, and they are provided with flexible appointments to assist with this. Where we aren't able to undertake these checks through our normal appointment process, we will take steps to force access.

B) Fire Safety

- 5.7.3 The Groups approach to fire safety is primarily one of **fire prevention and life preservation**.
- 5.7.4 By delivering our Fire Prevention and Mitigation framework and working closely with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service we will ensure that the homes we own and manage stay safe places to live.
- 5.7.5 Fire safety measures and fire safety guidance is regularly reviewed through the Fire Safety Working Group chaired by the Group Health & Safety Manager.

C) Asbestos Management

- 5.7.6 We acknowledge the health hazards associated with asbestos arising from exposure to asbestos. We will take the appropriate measures to prevent and minimise exposure as reasonably practicable through the use of control measures and specialist contractors in accordance with our obligations under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.
- 5.7.7 Our approach to managing asbestos is set out in the Group Asbestos Management Arrangement, which is part of the Group Health and Safety policy.

D) Thermostatic Mixing Valve (TMV) Installation & Servicing

- 5.7.8 We will undertake **annual servicing** of TMVs to properties where a customer, or a family member residing in their home has been identified as being **vulnerable to scalding** i.e. is over 75 years or under 5 years old.

E) Fixed Installation Testing (FIT)

- 5.7.9 We are required under the Scottish Housing Quality Standard to carry out Fixed Installation Testing in our properties every **5 years**. It is important that customers provide access to their homes to enable us to undertake this work, and flexible appointments are provided to assist with this. Where we aren't able to undertake these checks through our normal appointment process, we will take steps to force access.

F) Water Systems Management

5.7.10 We operate a comprehensive management regime that incorporates risk assessments, sampling, cleaning, outlet testing etc. to ensure all our properties have a safe source of water which meets all relevant standards and legislation.

G) Pressure Systems

5.7.11 We operate a comprehensive management regime that undertakes inspections and remedial works to ensure the properties comply with the Pressure Systems Safety Regulations.

H) Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) Management

5.7.12 We will operate a comprehensive management regime in relation to inspections of lifts, undertake lift inspections in accordance with the agreed schedule to meet insurance requirements and remedial works, annual testing of lightning protection systems, dry risers and sprinkler systems.

5.7.13 We will also manage a programme of regular and systematic inspections of landlord supplies with the relevant local authority to blocks of flatted dwellings and stair lighting within all properties with close entrances.

6. Legislative & Regulatory Requirements

6.1 Regulatory Compliance

Properties for Social Rent

6.1.1 As a registered provider of social housing, we are required to comply with the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The Charter sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. The Charter came into effect in April 2012 and was recently updated in November 2022. The purpose of the Charter is to improve the quality and value of services that social landlords provide for their customers. This will be achieved by:

- Providing customers with a clear statement of what they can expect from us in terms of the reactive repairs and planned maintenance service;
- Concentrating our efforts on achieving outcomes that matter to our customers; and
- Regularly assessing the performance of our reactive repairs and planned maintenance service to identify areas of good performance and also areas that need improvement.

6.2 Legislative Compliance

- 6.2.1 Our landlord activities to maintain our properties for social rent should comply with all legislation, guidance and best practice, further details on which are noted on the Scottish Government website.

6.3 Right to Repair

- 6.3.1 Where a customer reports a repair covered by the provisions of the Scottish Secure Tenants (Right to Repair) Regulations 2002, works will be undertaken in accordance with fixed timescales which are set out in the Regulations.
- 6.3.2 Compensation (as set out in the Regulations) will be payable where these timescales are not met.

6.4 Right to Compensation for Improvements

- 6.4.1 Where a customer is ending their tenancy they may be eligible for compensation for qualifying improvements which have been undertaken with the approval of the landlord. Compensation will be in accordance with the formula set out in the Scottish Secure Tenants (Compensation for Improvements) Regulations 2002.

6.5 Data Protection

- 6.5.1 WHS recognises the confidential nature of the information given by its customers and respects that it should not be disclosed to anyone who does not have a need and a right to know it. WHS complies with the provision of The General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

7. Monitoring, Service Improvement & Review

7.1 Customer Engagement – ‘You’re in Control 24/7’

- 7.1.1 Increased customer involvement plays a key role in helping us develop the future direction of our repairs and maintenance service, tailored to the individual. We will also engage with customers through web self-service, social media emails, texts and in customer conversations through digitally enabled mobile staff. We will embrace the **‘Voice of the customer’**, our digital feedback tool which will allow customers to answer quick surveys which will provide real time feedback on what is going well and allows for early intervention where issues arise.
- 7.1.2 The **Wheatley Group Scrutiny Panel** is scrutinising the repairs service as a thematic area in 2023 and any service improvement areas recommended through this will be built into our improvement action planning.
- 7.1.3 We will also continue to work closely with **Customer Voice Panels** consisting of residents to obtain feedback on the service.
- 7.1.4 Continuous improvement in service delivery and performance will be tracked and monitored and results shared with customers. We will do this by tracking and analysing the performance of the repairs service and by working with customers through a range of involvement initiatives across new digital platforms and traditional means as outlined above.

7.2 Tenant Satisfaction

- 7.2.1 On completion of a repair customers will be invited to provide feedback digitally on their specific repair online, by email or text. This will offer customers the opportunity to provide instant feedback as soon as the repair is completed and increase the number of customers delivering feedback.
- 7.2.2 Customers will also be able to provide feedback by post, telephone or online through their online customer account where preferred, ensuring that no customer is left behind.
- 7.2.3 We will conduct customer satisfaction surveys to gather feedback on the performance of the repairs service.
- 7.2.4 We will regularly report our customer satisfaction survey results to customers through our website and other channels.

7.3 Performance Reporting and Monitoring

- 7.3.1 Performance will be reviewed regularly by:
 - Service delivery teams
 - Group Audit Committee
 - Senior management teams
 - WHS Board
 - Group Scrutiny Panel
 - We will also regularly report on our performance to customers through various channels.

7.4 Complaints

- 7.4.1 We have a formal complaints policy and actively encourage customers who are unhappy with any aspect of the repairs service to use the formal complaint procedure. Our complaints process is published on our website.

7.5 Review

- 7.5.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years. In addition, regular reviews will be considered where, for example, there is a need to respond to new legislation/policy guidance or there are changes to the organization.
- 7.5.2 Reviews will consider customer feedback, legislative changes, performance standard and good practice changes.
- 7.5.3 We will publish this repairs and maintenance policy on our website. A hard copy is also available on request. Customers may also request a copy of the policy in other formats and languages.