

# Agenda Item 9

**Report of:** *Ajman Ali (Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services)*

**Report to:** *Housing Policy Committee*

**Date of Decision:** *21<sup>st</sup> March 2024*

**Subject:** *Supplementary report to agenda item 9 – Housing Repairs Policy*

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## **Purpose of Supplement to Report:**

This supplementary report seeks to advise Members of the outcomes of consultation on the draft Housing Repairs Policy. Section 3 of the main Housing Repairs Policy report advised Members that consultation was being undertaken through Have Your Say Sheffield and that the results of this consultation would be available prior to the Housing Committee meeting.

Appendix 2 presents the outcome of this consultation. It also highlights a small number of recommended changes to the Housing Repairs Policy and its implementation because of this consultation. The amended Housing Repairs Policy is presented as Appendix 3 to this report.

## **Amended Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Housing Policy Committee:

1. Note the outcomes of the consultation undertaken as part of the Repairs Policy Review, as described in this report.
2. Approves the new Housing Repairs Policy as described in Appendix 3 of this report.
3. Notes that the Director of Operational Services in consultation with the Chair of the Housing Policy Committee will draft and publish a concise information sheet for tenants which is a more accessible summary of the information contained in the new Housing Repairs Policy and which clearly outlines both tenant and Council responsibilities.
4. Notes that the Director of Operational Services in consultation with the Chair of the Housing Policy Committee will undertake a review of information available to tenants on our website to ensure that this is consistent with the new Housing Repairs Policy.
5. Note that awareness training will be provided for officers in our housing and repairs service, and colleagues in the call centre, on the different responsibilities outlined in the new policy to ensure that tenants receive clear and correct advice on repairs.

## **Additional Papers:**

**Appendix 2 – Outcomes of the consultation on the Repairs Policy**

**Appendix 3 – Post Consultation Proposed Sheffield City Council Housing Repairs Policy**

## **Appendix 2**

### **Outcomes of consultation on the Repairs Policy**

#### **1. Introduction**

We recently carried out a consultation with tenants and leaseholders, asking them for their thoughts on our new Repairs Policy. Feedback from the consultation was used to help improve the wording of the new Repairs Policy.

#### **2. Objectives**

The objectives of this consultation were:

- To understand if the policy is easy to read.
- To understand if the policy makes it clear which types of repairs we expect our tenants to be responsible for
- To understand if there were any areas of the policy which were unclear or not easy to read.
- To use the feedback to help improve the wording of the new policy.

#### **3. Survey method**

The consultation was carried out online on the Council's [Have Your Say Sheffield](#) engagement platform. Respondents were asked to read through the proposed new Repairs Policy before answering any questions. Respondents were then asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about the Repairs Policy:

- The Repairs Policy is easy to read.
- I understand which types of repairs the Council is responsible for, the timescales, and how they will be delivered.
- I understand which types of repairs I am responsible for as a tenant.

If respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of these statements, they were asked to tell us a bit about why. All respondents were also asked if there was anything that could be made clearer within the policy. This was so that we could understand any areas for improvement in the policy.

#### **4. Survey results**

There were 350 responses to the consultation.

Survey responses																
Question	Response															
<p>Q1. Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statement about the Repairs Policy:</p> <p><b>The Repairs Policy is easy to read</b></p>	<p>Question options (Click items to hide)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strongly agree</li> <li>Agree</li> <li>Disagree</li> <li>Strongly disagree</li> </ul> <table border="1"> <caption>Q1 Response Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Strongly agree</td> <td>52</td> <td>15.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Agree</td> <td>239</td> <td>70.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disagree</td> <td>26</td> <td>7.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strongly disagree</td> <td>24</td> <td>7.0%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Count	Percentage	Strongly agree	52	15.2%	Agree	239	70.1%	Disagree	26	7.6%	Strongly disagree	24	7.0%
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Strongly agree	52	15.2%														
Agree	239	70.1%														
Disagree	26	7.6%														
Strongly disagree	24	7.0%														
<p>Q2. Please select how much you agree or disagree with the following statement about the Repairs Policy:</p> <p><b>I understand which types of repairs the Council is responsible for, the timescales, and how they will be delivered</b></p>	<p>Question options (Click items to hide)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strongly agree</li> <li>Agree</li> <li>Disagree</li> <li>Strongly disagree</li> </ul> <table border="1"> <caption>Q2 Response Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Strongly agree</td> <td>52</td> <td>15.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Agree</td> <td>210</td> <td>61.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disagree</td> <td>42</td> <td>12.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strongly disagree</td> <td>39</td> <td>11.4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Count	Percentage	Strongly agree	52	15.2%	Agree	210	61.2%	Disagree	42	12.2%	Strongly disagree	39	11.4%
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## 5. Analysis

- Feedback from respondents was generally positive, each Likert question having over 76% agreement from respondents.
- Over 85% agreed or strongly agreed that the repairs policy was easy to read, and that they understood which types of repairs they were responsible for as a tenant.
- Slightly less (76%) tenants agreed that they understood which types of repairs the Council is responsible for, the timescales, and how they will be delivered. Most of the comments from those disagreeing related to the timescales part of the question. Many commented that in their experience, repairs timescales were often not kept to and therefore it was difficult to understand why they were outlined in the policy.
- Some respondents pointed out that the policy was lengthy and difficult to follow, particularly for those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia. It was suggested that a more accessible version be created for tenants to more easily refer to.

- Other tenants suggested a web page should be created outlining the different responsibilities of the council and tenants.
- Some respondents commented that they had been given conflicting advice about responsibilities in the past by council officers (e.g. repairs officers, call centre officers), particularly in relation to external parts of properties. This highlights the need for us to be fair and consistent in our application of this policy.
- Some tenants requested we go into more detail on our handyman service, for example providing timescales for this service.
- Some specific suggestions were made about amending the wording on aspects of the policy.
- Many of the negative comments highlighted a general dissatisfaction with the repairs service which is important feedback for the Council to receive and act upon.

## **6. Conclusions and recommendations**

- The consultation demonstrated that the policy was easy to read and clear on responsibilities for most respondents.
- No significant changes were requested by consultees which demonstrates that the original Repairs Policy as proposed was substantially in line with tenants' expectations. Additionally, the 'Tenant Voices Matter' group at their meeting this week raised no additional points on the Policy.
- The feedback helped identify some specific areas of the policy that required amendment to make the responsibilities clearer.
  - Members are asked to approved the revised Repairs Policy attached to this report which incorporates a small number of changes highlighted through the consultation.
- The feedback has also helped us to understand some other things we should do to help everyone understand their responsibilities. As a result, Members are also asked to :
  - Grant delegated authority to the Director of Operational Services in consultation with the Chair of the Housing Policy Committee to draft and publish a concise information sheet for tenants which is a more accessible summary of the information contained in the new Housing Repairs Policy and which clearly outlines both tenant and Council responsibilities.
  - Grant delegated authority to the Director of Operational Services in consultation with the Chair of the Housing Policy Committee to undertake a review of information available to tenants on our website to ensure that this is consistent with the new policy.
  - Note that awareness training will be provided for officers in our housing and repairs service, and colleagues in the call centre, on the different responsibilities outlined in the new policy to ensure that tenants receive clear and correct advice on repairs.

## 7. Demographic information

We collected some demographic information from our respondents. This helps us to understand how representative of our overall tenant base the respondents were. The demographic information is as below:

<b>Demographic data</b>	
Total respondents	350
Respondents completing equalities monitoring questions	243
Ethnicity	Asian / Asian British: 2% Black / Black British: 3% Mixed / multiple heritage: 3% White / White British: 88% Other: 5%
Unpaid caring responsibilities	22%
Religion or belief	Buddhist: 0.5% Christian: 47% Muslim: 2% Sikh: 0.5% Hindu: 0% Jewish: 0% None: 45% Other: 5%
Age profile	24 and under: 1% 25 – 34: 0.5% 35 – 44: 11% 45 – 54: 22% 55 – 64: 29% 65 – 74: 20% 75 – 84: 8% 85 and over: 1%
Gender identity	Female: 62% Male: 36% Non-binary: 1% Other: 1%
Sex	Female: 63% Male: 37%
Disability or long-term health condition	64%
Sexual orientation	Bisexual: 2% Gay / lesbian: 5% Heterosexual / straight: 90% Other: 3%

We know that approximately 24% of our tenants have a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background. This compared with the approximately 13% of respondents with a BAME background shows that the group was underrepresented in this consultation. This is something we need to look to improve in future consultations.

We also had a particularly low response rate from our younger tenants. Approximately 29% of our tenants are under 40, but only around 12% of survey respondents were under 44. This is again something we should look to improve going forwards with our consultation.

# Appendix 3 – Draft Sheffield City Council Housing Repairs Policy

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Scope and principles
3. Legislation and guidance
4. Policy key responsibilities and implementation
5. Quality control and monitoring
6. Legal Action
7. Providing additional support to our tenants
8. Review

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** Sheffield City Council is committed to the delivery of a high quality, effective and timely repair service for our tenants. This policy sets out how we will deliver a responsive repairs service that meets the needs of our tenants and enables us to fulfil our statutory, regulatory, and contractual obligations.
- 1.2** Sheffield City Council's Tenancy Conditions, [You and Your Home](#) set out our contractual obligations as a landlord. This policy explains in more detail the repairs that Sheffield City Council will be responsible for. It also sets out the repairs we expect our tenants to undertake for themselves where we do not take responsibility as a landlord.

## 2.0 Scope and principles

- 2.1** The policy covers repairs within tenanted properties (including gardens and garages, subject to terms of the tenancy conditions), in communal areas, and to communal assets for example, shared gardens, shared spaces including lifts and corridors. The definition of a 'repair' for the purpose of this policy is 'work that arises from damage or wear and tear to tenanted properties, communal areas and common parts.'
- 2.2** In-addition to repair work, Sheffield City Council has responsibilities in relation to several other legal duties including gas safety, electrical and asbestos inspections. These responsibilities are covered by separate policies.
- 2.3** Sheffield City Council will operate according to the following principles:
- We will ensure we meet our repairing obligations so that Sheffield City Council homes are well maintained throughout the duration of the tenancy at least to the existing lettable standard
  - We will ensure our homes comply with all legislative, regulatory, and contractual (including tenancy) obligations
  - We will deliver quality work which has the objective of completing repairs at the first visit wherever possible
  - We will always communicate effectively to our tenants in relation to the delivery of our responsive repairs service and enable them to communicate effectively with us
  - We will respond to the needs of individual tenants and deliver our services with fairness and respect
  - We will offer our tenants suitable and convenient choice in booking appointments for repairs

### **3.0 Legislation and guidance**

**3.1** Sheffield City Council will meet its obligations under the following legislation and guidance:

- Building Safety Act 2022
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- **Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994**
- Gas Safety (installations and use) Regulations 1998
- Health and Social Care Act 2008
- **Housing and Regeneration Act 2008**
- Housing Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2015
- Home Standard, Regulator of Social Housing, 2015
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- **Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023**

### **4.0 Policy key responsibilities and implementation**

**4.1** Carrying out repairs is one of the most important services we deliver to our tenants. We want Sheffield City Council homes to be maintained in an affordable manner and ensure all our homes provide our tenants with a safe, warm, and dry home, where the structure, fixtures and fittings are in working order.

**4.2** Condition 7 of the Tenancy Conditions sets out what Sheffield City Council will be responsible for repairing and maintaining as a landlord. It is the tenant's responsibility to tell us about a repair we are responsible for as soon as possible. This policy covers all the repair obligations set out in that condition. Sheffield City Council's repairing obligations under condition 7 will include us being responsible for repairing:

- a) The structure and outside of the building, including shared parts, (roof, outside walls, balconies, permanent outhouses, outside doors (including handles, locks, and latches), windows (including window and door glazing, windowsills and frames), chimneys and chimney stacks, drains, gutters and outside pipes,) and communal areas (such as corridors stairways entrances and lighting) and other shared facilities such as entry phones, rubbish chutes and lifts
- b) Inside walls, plastering (except as specified in section 4.3 iv of this policy), skirting boards, doors, door frames (including handles, locks, and latches) floors and ceilings
- c) Electric wiring, sockets, light fittings and gas and water pipes, sanitation (and the equipment that has been installed to deliver these services). Where fluorescent fittings have been installed in properties these will be replaced when they come to the end of their lifespan with new LED fittings as and when required **(replacement fluorescent tubes are a tenant responsibility as specified in section 4.3 iii of**

**this policy).** We will only connect appliances when they are supplied as part of Furnished Accommodation

- d) Heating equipment and hot water installations such as boilers, immersion heaters, radiators, storage radiators and fires. Where a fire is no longer required to adequately heat the property they may be disconnected, removed or replaced with a suitable alternative.
- e) Bathroom fixtures (sinks, basins, baths, showers, and toilets). Repairs to bathroom fixtures will only be undertaken if they are broken or not functioning correctly. Fixtures will not be replaced merely because of their age or for cosmetic reasons. The Council will endeavour to make sure that any fixture matches with what you already have. However, if an exact match cannot be found, the nearest possible match will be provided. A whole bathroom suite will not be replaced just because a match can't be found
- f) Kitchen fixtures and fittings. Repairs to kitchen fixtures and fitting will only be undertaken if they are broken not functioning correctly. Fixtures will not be replaced merely because of their age or for cosmetic reasons. The Council will endeavour to make sure that any fixture or fitting matches with what you already have. However, if an exact match cannot be found, the nearest possible match will be provided. Kitchen units will not be replaced just because a match can't be found
- g) Pathways and steps which are the main means of getting to your home
- h) Shared television aerial or shared satellite dish we have provided
- i) Supporting or retaining walls, and boundary walls and metal railings to the property
- j) Trees in the boundary of your tenancy where they are causing a danger or damage
- k) Decoration of the outside and any shared parts of the building
- l) Furniture and fittings we have provided
- m) Repairing and replacing smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms once informed they are faulty

**4.3** Condition 9 of the Tenancy Conditions sets out the repairs that tenants are responsible for. We will not normally undertake repairs which, under the tenancy conditions, are the tenant's responsibility. Repairs and maintenance we expect our tenants to take responsibility for include but are not limited to the following:

- i. Small kitchen and bathroom repairs such as plugs and chains to baths, basins, and sinks; repairing or replacing shower curtains; re-fixing or replacing toilet seats, blockages caused by the tenant to any waste system
- ii. Repairs to white goods such as washing machine, fridge/freezer unless supplied by Sheffield City Council as part of furnished accommodation



- iii. General internal maintenance such as resetting fuse or trip switch; light bulbs Including LED, fluorescent tubes and replacing starters (excluding lights in communal areas); batteries to smoke and carbon monoxide detectors (**where these can be replaced**) and testing them (unless they are faulty or in need of repair in which case the tenant should report it to the Council) ; individual TV aerial or satellite dish (unless it is a hazard to neighbours); telephone extension points and cables; plumbing in and connecting appliances unless supplied by us as part of furnished accommodation
- iv. Other small internal repairs such as plastering or filling small holes or cracks less than 5mm wide in walls or ceilings, glazing if damaged
- v. General external maintenance (except for communal areas) such as clothes post/washing lines, clearing blocked ground level gullies of rubbish and leaves, doorbells, door nameplates and numbers
- vi. Clearing your items and possessions to allow repairs and maintenance to take place – including lifting and replacing carpets, flooring. Assistance can be provided in instances where the tenant is unable to undertake such a clearance
- vii. Decorating the inside of your home includes preparatory work for redecoration such as door adjustment to fit carpets, fixtures, and fittings such as coat hooks, curtain rails and curtain battens; any repairs after DIY/improvement works
- viii. We will not normally undertake repairs to fixtures and fittings installed by our tenants. If we do attend a tenant's home and it is found to be a tenant's own installed component, we reserve the right to recover the cost of the repair from the tenant. If we cannot repair, then we will replace it with a component from the Sheffield City Council specification
- ix. You are responsible for making sure that your gardens, yards, hedges, fences and gates, garages and other outbuildings at your home are maintained in a good and tidy condition and are kept free from refuse or unwanted items. This is specified further in condition 36 of the tenancy conditions. When notified we will consider actions to make safe any damaged or dangerous fencing, gates, and boundary / retaining walls where a health and safety risk has been identified

**4.4** Tenants will be responsible if damage is caused to the property either by their own actions or by their visitors; and also if damage is caused justifiably by the police forcing entry to the home (if the Police have been in error, then it is expected that they will reimburse any costs). We will expect the tenant to rectify it and put things right. If the tenant does not do so, or does not do so to the required standard, we may carry out the repair and recover the cost of doing so from the tenant. **We may also charge tenants if they report a repair which is subsequently shown to be due to damage caused by their own actions or those of their visitors.**

**4.5** Tenants are responsible for the safe keeping of keys and fobs that have been provided for the property, including door, window, and communal access locks. We will charge tenants the cost of any replacements or lock change, unless if keys have been stolen and a police crime number can be provided.

**4.6** Tenants should try to maintain an ambient temperature throughout their home and where ventilation units are provided, they should be switched on to reduce the possibility of condensation and mould occurring. Tenants are advised to clear mould spots as soon as they appear using an antifungal cleaning product to reduce the impacts of damp, mould, and condensation. Where tenants have attempted to clean the area and it continues to come back, then they should be reported to the Council so that we can arrange for it be inspected and assess the underlying cause and what further action we need to take.

**4.7** Sheffield City Council will categorise repair requests depending on all the following:

- the repair being requested
- the inconvenience to the tenant
- our general health and safety obligations
- the risk of further damage to the property

<b>Responsive Repair Priority</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Response time</b>
<p><b>Emergency</b> Action is required to prevent a serious risk to health and safety, major damage to the structure of the property or results in the property being insecure. When reported detailed questions will be asked to ensure the repair is a genuine emergency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• total electrical failure</li> <li>• uncontrollable leaks</li> <li>• boarding up a broken window</li> <li>• communal door entry (door entry fob system)</li> </ul>	<p>Attended within four hours. Appointments will not be made, and our expectation is that an adult will remain in the property until we can attend and make safe. Wherever, possible, the completion of out-of-hours repairs will be deferred to the next working day.</p>
<p><b>Urgent</b> Priority Repairs which seriously affect a tenants' comfort or cause damage to the property.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plumbing and drainage faults</li> <li>• <b>total</b> loss of heating or hot water</li> </ul>	<p>We attend to urgent repairs within 24 hours and do not make appointments. You will be informed of the approximate time of arrival</p>
<p><b>Routine</b> Other repairs that need to be done to the home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small external repairs</li> <li>• fixing cupboards or units</li> </ul>	<p>Routine repairs can take up to 25 working days (5 weeks) but will be completed as soon as possible. We will seek to offer our tenants reasonable choice in making a repairs appointment.</p>
<p><b>Planned</b> Including items that require manufacturing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• external doors</li> <li>• large areas of plastering</li> </ul>	<p>Can take between 25 to 55 working days (11 weeks).</p>

**4.8** Tenants will be offered morning, afternoon, all day, and outside of "school run" hours appointment slots. Some evening and weekend appointments where this is feasible. If we

need to change agreed arrangements, we will contact the tenant as far in advance as possible to advise them. Tenants will need to ensure that they are home for their appointment. If there is no one at home, then the repair will be cancelled, and the tenant will need to re-report this to arrange an appointment.

**4.9** Sheffield City Council will operate an Out of Hours service to respond to emergency situations. In addition, where possible subject to staff availability a limited number of evening and weekend appointments will be offered for non-emergency repairs.

**4.10** Our staff and contractors will treat our tenants with dignity and respect. They will be polite and courteous and will always carry and offer an identity card before entering a tenant's home. We will monitor the quality of our contractor's work and how they behave in our tenants' homes. We also expect our tenants to always treat our employees and contractors with respect. For example, not distracting contractors and employees and not smoking while they are in the property.

**4.11** Tenants have access to the right to repair scheme. For certain types of repairs the tenant can arrange to have the work carried out if:

- They have ordered a repair
- The repair has not been completed in the time promised
- The value of the repair is less than £250
- The repair is completed by a contractor on the Council's approved list
- Tenant must complete a notice of claim form and send this to us for reimbursement

## **5.0 Quality control and monitoring**

**5.1** We will hold accurate information and performance data on our repairs service and its activities to ensure that we have quality control and monitoring in place. The performance of our repairs service is regularly monitored by senior managers through an internal scrutiny board. Performance is also regularly reported to tenant representatives. Each quarter the Housing Policy Committee receives a report detailing the performance of the repairs service to monitor and highlight any issues of concern. This report is also published and open to external scrutiny.

## **6.0 Gaining Access and Legal Action**

**6.1** Our tenancy conditions require our tenants to allow us (including appointed contractors) access to their home to carry out repairs at the agreed appointment time. Sheffield City Council will pursue legal action to enter Council owned properties where necessary.

**6.2** If we are unable to gain access to carry out the repairs and maintain the integrity of the property, its fabric and/or the safety of the tenant or those in the vicinity of the property is compromised, we will take appropriate action to gain access to carry out the repair. This may include, but is not limited to, obtaining an injunction for access. If we are required to gain access this way, we will consider taking both immediate and retrospective action against the tenant for the breach of their tenancy conditions. We will always pass on to the tenant the costs incurred by us taking this action.

**6.3** The specific legal measures taken by the Council will vary depending on individual circumstances of each case, including but not limited to: -

- Warrant application
- Injunction application
- EPA application (Environmental Protection Act)
- Possession proceedings

## **7.0 Providing additional support to our tenants**

**7.1** Sheffield City Council will make every effort to support tenants who may have difficulties in managing their property and sustaining a successful tenancy. We will treat all vulnerabilities sensitively, and adapt our working practices where appropriate, to ensure tenants do not face any additional barriers when accessing our service. We will record relevant support needs on our systems and use this information to ensure we tailor our service to the individual needs of our tenants.

**7.2** We will offer a Handyperson Service for tenants who are 60 years old or over, disabled, or suffer from severe health problems. This free Handyperson service will help with jobs such as:

- fixing curtain rails
- fitting shelves
- checking and fitting battery-operated smoke alarms
- fitting additional door locks or chains
- hanging pictures, mirrors, clocks and so on
- changing light bulbs
- fitting wireless solar security lights
- moving furniture within your home
- securing carpets or trailing wires
- assembling small pieces of flat pack furniture

## **8.0 Review**

**8.1** This policy will be reviewed every two years. We will ensure the policy is available on the Council's website. Paper copies can be provided on request.