

TITLE OF REPORT: Council Housing Repairs Policy

REPORT OF: Paul Dowling, Strategic Director, Communities and Environment

Purpose of the Report

1. To request Cabinet recommend the Council to approve changes to the repairs policy for council housing stock. The repairs policy is delivered by The Gateshead Housing Company on behalf of the Council.

Background

2. The existing repairs policy was approved by Cabinet and full Council in January 2004 and introduced revised repair categories and timescales, set out the list of repairs that are the responsibility of the tenant and included a make safe policy to cover out of hours work.
3. The policy was further updated at Cabinet 19 September 2006 which approved that a number of planned repairs were incorporated into improvement work programmes. The policy update in 2006 also implemented improvements to the communal repairs service, further revised the rechargeable repairs list and also amended the timescales for certain heating and hot water repairs.
4. The current policy does not include service developments and improvements that have been implemented through the contractual arrangements that have been in place since 2004. For example, whilst the existing policy does cover the different categories of repair work, it does not cover any appointment timescales. Appointment timescales have been introduced following customer consultation and are set out in the current repairs contract but do not form part of the current policy framework.
5. To support the delivery of a customer focused service TGHC have continually collected and updated customer profile information. This information is gathered to inform service delivery and assess customer vulnerability.
6. Through the use of customer profile information the service is able to understand individual customer household needs. When receiving repair requests the service is designed to accommodate the needs of tenants and leaseholders and deliver an efficient value for money service.

Proposals

7. A full description of the proposed changes to the repairs policy and standards of service delivery are contained in Appendix 2.
8. **Proposals to change the policy as follows:**
 - a. Winter working timescales
 - Currently 1 November to 30 April and proposed to be 1 November to 28 February
 - b. Upgrading of jobs
 - Current approach to upgrades - for people over the age of 70, and people who have a recognised disability with a proposed amendment to introduce upgrades for people who have dependent children under the age of 12 months
 - c. Introduce timescales for drainage, path and communal boiler repairs
 - Emergency same day, emergency, urgent, routine, planned
 - d. For divisional fencing between two Council homes we will only consider replacing/repairing fencing where it is needed to provide:
 - Protection for people entering a garden where the boundary fence line borders a busy thoroughfare or public space
 - Separation of a garden from hazards such as streams or severe changes in ground level at the edge of a property (in excess of 900mm)
 - Metal or wooden fencing will not be installed where walls are present
9. **Proposals to adopt new ways of working as follows:**
 - a. Rechargeable Repair payments in advance
 - b. A reviewed approach to managing no access
10. **Proposals to update the policy to reflect and clarify existing working arrangements and service standards in the following areas:**
 - Appointments timescales
 - Categories of work
 - Tenant responsibilities
 - No access protocol
 - Permission requests
 - Intermediate fencing
 - Scaffold protocol
 - Electric fire repairs
 - Pest control services

- Vehicle crossings
- Repairs during Right to Buy applications
- Make safe and Out of Hours protocol
- Condensation management and support
- Recharging for gas warrants
- Planned or batched Repairs

11. It is proposed that once implemented the revised repairs policy and recommendations will be evaluated to assess their impact.

Recommendation

12. Cabinet is asked to recommend the Council to approve changes to the repairs policy and standards of service delivery as set out in Appendix 2 and outlined above.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To ensure that the repairs policy is up to date and includes service developments that have been implemented through recent contractual arrangements.
- (ii) To ensure the service maintains customer focus and strives to achieve value for money.

1. Policy Context

The proposed changes to Council Housing Repairs Policy are consistent with the overall objectives for Gateshead as set out in Vision 2030 and the Council Plan.

Background

2. The existing repairs policy was approved by Cabinet 13 January 2004 and then full Council and introduced revised repair categories and timescales, set out the list of repairs that are the responsibility of the tenant and included a make safe policy to cover out of hours work.
3. The policy was further updated at Cabinet 19 September 2006 which approved that a number of planned repairs were incorporated into improvement work programmes. The policy update in 2006 also implemented improvements to the communal repairs service, further revised the rechargeable repairs list and also amended the timescales for certain heating and hot water repairs.
4. The current policy does not include service developments and improvements that have been implemented through the contractual arrangements that have been in place since 2004. For example, whilst the existing policy does cover the different categories of repair work, it does not cover any appointment timescales. Appointment timescales have been introduced following customer consultation and are set out in the current repairs contract but do not form part of the current policy framework.
5. To support the delivery of a customer focused service TGHC have continually collected and updated customer profile information. This information is gathered to inform service delivery and assess customer vulnerability.
6. Through the use of customer profile information the service is able to understand individual customer household needs. When receiving repair requests the service is designed to accommodate the needs of tenants and leaseholders and deliver an efficient value for money service.

7. Consultation

The Cabinet Members for Housing and Economy were consulted in preparing this report and their comments have been taken into account.

The Leader and Deputy Leader have also been consulted on the report.

8. Alternative Options

The option of not updating the repairs policy would exacerbate the issue of the policy being removed from custom and practice and lead to uncertainty in approach and performance requirements both for the tenants and TGHC.

The option of reviewing the policy at a later date would mean that the updated policy would not coincide with the new delivery model for housing repairs and maintenance.

9. Implications of Recommended Option

Resources:

- (a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources, confirms that while elements of the repair policy proposals such as changes to intermediate fencing may be associated with an increase in costs, other areas are subject to potentially significant savings.

It is expected that the proposed changes to winter working has the potential to reduce costs by an estimated £18,000 by the end of year one

- (b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no direct Human Resource Implications as a result of the Housing Repairs Policy being updated.
- (c) **Property Implications** – Whilst the repair and maintenance of council housing stock is fundamental to the protection of the asset and the wellbeing of the council tenants there are no changes to the property implications as a result of the Housing Repairs Policy being updated.

5. Risk Management Implications - The report links to the strategic risks around:

- a. Delivering effective asset management
- b. Delivering on new projects
- c. Maintaining a positive reputation
- d. Managing finances and delivering value for money
- e. Effectively managing business continuity

6. Equality and Diversity Implications – There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report

7. Crime and Disorder Implications – There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

8. Health Implications – Appropriate delivery of the repair policy and associated services to customer will bring positive health implications to our customers. Ensuring day to day repairs, cyclical and investment works are well managed will maintain essential services and mitigate against health risks.

9. Sustainability Implications – There are no direct sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

10. Human Rights Implications – there are no human rights implications arising directly from this report.

11. Area and Ward Implications – All wards.

Background Information

Report to Cabinet 13 January 2004

Responsive Repairs Service – Review of repair categories and the establishment of a revised list of repairs that are tenant responsibility.

Report to Cabinet 19 September 2006

Review of Repair Categories

Update to Repair Policy and Procedures

This report recommends updates to the repairs policy and procedures to provide clarification in areas of service delivery as follows:

Yellow Highlighted comments = current delivery arrangements where clarity is provided for customers and employees

Green Highlighted comments = proposed new ways of working

Blue highlighted comments = proposed new policy areas

The main proposals are as follows:

Proposal 1

Given that appointment slots have not previously been covered in the repair policy, it is proposed that a formalised approach to appointments be in place from April 2017

Appointments

While we will aim to provide our customers with an appointment, not all repairs will be appointed at the first point of contact or completed at our first visit to your home. This will happen for example when (1) we will make your home safe and then return to complete the repair (2) we will need to inspect and plan the works or (3) where works will be batched for completion.

Appointment times offered:

- 2 hour appointment (8.00-10.00, 10.00-12.00, 12.30-14.30, 14.30-16.30)
- School Run (10.00 – 14.00)
- All-day appointment (8.00 – 16.30)

All external and communal repairs where there are no access concerns will result in an all-day timeslot.

Upon making an appointment with us you will be sent a confirmation text message. We will aim to contact you the evening before your appointment to check you are still available and send a text when we are on our way to your home. If at any stage you realise you are not going to be available for your appointment please contact us so we can re-arrange our visit.

For repairs where access was not required we will send you a text to confirm that the works are complete.

Proposal 2

It is proposed to amend the repair categories and timescales to reflect our current working arrangements.

We will aim to complete all repairs in line with the category timescales listed below.

Emergency Same Day Repair

Attend and make safe within 6 hours, if possible complete the repair. Any further works will be raised as a new job and placed within its appropriate repair category.

Emergency Repair - Timescale 24 working hours

Attend and make safe within 24 working hours, if possible complete the repair. Any further works will be raised as a new job and placed within its appropriate repair category.

Urgent Repair - Timescale 3 working days

Attend and if possible complete the repair within 3 working days. Any further works will be raised as a new job and placed within its appropriate repair category.

Routine Repair - Timescale 20 working days

Attend and complete the repair within 20 working days.

Planned Repair - Timescale 40 working days

Attend to plan the works and complete within 40 working days. Repairs within this category may be batched to achieve value for money. In this instance we will communicate a new timescale to you.

Major Repair - Timescale 40 days

Attend to plan the works and complete within 40 working days. Repairs within this category may be batched to achieve value for money. In this instance we will communicate a new timescale to you.

A level of additional priority may be offered to our more vulnerable customers including those who are over the age of 70, have a recognised disability or who have dependent children under the age of 12 months.

Customer requests for appointments beyond these category timescales will be accommodated with the exception of emergency repairs.

We may in the future consider other category and appointment systems and move to the most efficient best practice model.

Planned or batched Repairs

For value for money purposes certain repairs may be batched to achieve economies of scale in delivery. In these instances repairs such as rebuilding of brick walls, fence and boundary maintenance and non-essential roof repairs may be completed outside of the planned 40 working day timescales. We will advise when your repair falls into this category and update you when the work will be undertaken

Investment Works

Where replacement items are required that include major works to your home such as kitchens, bathrooms or roof replacements we may complete minor repairs only. The replacement will then be arranged via our investment team and completed as a one off or in a programme of works to your estate. A full replacement will only be completed by the repair service if TGHC deem there to be a significant health and safety risk and the element is beyond repair.

This will include partial replacement of elements although we will seek to match where coloured suites exist.

Proposal 3

To propose updates to list of tenant responsibilities and provide clarification in areas rechargeable repairs including a proposal to seek payment for all rechargeable work in advance. It is recognised that for certain items where for example health and safety is an issue then full payment may follow the work.

Tenants responsibilities – what we expect from you

- You must take proper care of your home and report any faults or damage immediately.
- If arrangements have been made to visit your home to carry out a repair or service you must keep the appointment
- You must not obstruct or deny works to your home or any communal areas
- You must ensure a responsible person(s) is present for any appointment at your home
- You must ensure that pets are removed from the area requiring repair in advance of our arrival
- Clear repair work area of personal items or valuables prior to any scheduled appointments

We ask that you ensure that a responsible person(s) is present at the time of any inspection, repair or service completed in your home. Please note that if a responsible person(s) is not present throughout our visit then the repair to your home may be rearranged or cancelled.

TGHC has a zero tolerance approach to abuse towards any staff or contractor by customers or any visitors to their homes. Customers should refrain from any behaviour that could be seen as aggressive, threatening, abusive or insulting. We will take reasonable measures to protect our staff from such behaviours as and when appropriate.

Some repairs are the responsibility of the tenant. Such repairs should be carried or arranged by yourself, using competent and qualified trades persons where applicable. A full list of these repairs will be found on our website.

Examples of such repairs include:

- Sinks, wash hand basin and baths unblocked
- Renew plug/chain to sink, wash hand basin and bath
- Replacement, repairs and adjustments to toilet seats (unless provided as part of an adaptation)
- Shower curtains (unless provided as part of an adaptation)
- Divisional fencing between two council homes
- Minor gate repairs including latches, locks and bolts
- Regrout wall tiles
- Minor cracks in wall plaster
- Repair doorbell/ door knockers/ letter boxes (excluding communal door access systems)

- Minor repairs to kitchen cupboards and drawers
- Connection and disconnection of gas cookers
- Repairs to internal door handles
- Replacement keys and lock changes
- TV Aerials (unless communal)
- Internal decoration, including areas of full plaster skim where tenant choice
- Battery operated smoke alarms
- Repair/replace fuses
- Fire surrounds and any repairs that arise from their fitting
- Washing poles
- Rotary driers (excluding in communal areas)

Gas cookers must be fitted and installed by a Gas Safe registered engineer. If during a service or repair we identify any defects with your gas cooker we may isolate your cooker for safety reasons. It will be your responsibility to arrange the repair or replacement of your gas cooker.

It is the tenants responsibility to pay for works undertaken by TGHC that are deemed as rechargeable repairs due to neglect, carelessness or deliberate action by you or any visitors to your home. Refer to our Recharge Policy for further details.

Examples of rechargeable repairs include:

- Any item damaged or broken beyond normal wear and tear
- Reglazing
- Gain entry after keys lost
- Lock changes at your request
- Any examples where you have undertaken DIY work to your home including:
 - Internal and external doors
 - Electrical fittings
 - Kitchen/bathroom fittings and units
 - Fire surrounds and any repairs that arise from their fitting

Where damage is caused to your home but a crime has been committed and you are able to provide us with an official crime reference number then the cost of the rechargeable repair may be waived. If it is deemed that the damage is in relation to you or your tenancy then the cost will still be applied. In the instance of Police gaining entry to your home for investigation you will still be liable for any associated costs.

Where tenants request TGHC to replace items that are deemed rechargeable payment will be sought in advance of the work being undertaken. Where replacement of the rechargeable item is required urgently or the customer is vulnerable then a deposit may be sought and a payment plan arranged that will enable the repair to be carried out.

TGHC retains the right to recover costs for any damaged elements and or clearance costs from customers on the departure from their tenancy (see rechargeable repair policy).

Proposal 4

To recognise the costs associated with no access we reserve the right to charge tenants for call out costs where no access is a continuous issue.

Where requested, customers must allow access for pre-arranged appointments.

Should the customer fail to allow access then the repair will be cancelled.

Where the repair is of an emergency or health and safety matter we will continue to attempt to make contact and gain access to complete the repair and or make safe. If not completing repair or make safe poses a safety risk to other customer or the property then we will take appropriate steps to gain access.

Proposal 5

To ratify in policy the current procedure for recharging the costs of warrants where no access for gas servicing is an issue.

The safety of our customers is paramount to us and for this reason access to complete a gas service is essential.

Should customers fail to allow access we will charge them for any warrant costs incurred to obtain access in order to undertake a gas service or solid fuel appliance service. You will be notified well in advance of the need for your annual gas service to be undertaken and the costs to be charged if access to your home can not be gained.

Proposal 6

To confirm that permission for tenants to complete an alteration or improvement to your home must be sought with written approval granted from TGHC prior to any works being completed.

Proposal 7

To provide guidance to customers on our approach to fencing and to ratify that any decision to repair or replace divisional fencing outside of the guidance below will be discretionary and subject to budgetary control and individual case management.

Dividing fencing is the responsibility of the customer. We do not carry out repairs to dividing fences to the front or rear of the property. However, if a dividing fence is shared with an owner occupier, repairs may be completed if there is clear evidence that the fencing is our responsibility. If the fence is deemed as the responsibility of the owner occupier then they must complete all necessary repairs, including making safe.

TGHC will remove your intermediate fence on your behalf if required, but will not replace it.

Where there is a Health and Safety concern, TGHC will remove, the fence with the owner's consent. If the owner occupier refuses to give consent then the existing fence has to remain in situ. In these cases legal advice may be sought.

We have no statutory responsibility to provide rear fencing. We will only consider replacing/repairing fencing where it is needed to provide:

- Protection for people entering a garden where the boundary fence line borders a busy thoroughfare or public space
- Separation of a garden from hazards such as streams or severe changes in ground level at the edge of a property (in excess of 900mm)

- Metal or wooden fencing will not be installed where walls are present

Areas that are currently open plan i.e. where there are no obvious individual garden areas, or where fencing has never been in place will not be fenced.

For properties where hedges provide the defensible space the hedging is the responsibility of the tenant or owner to maintain and keep in order. TGHC will not remove established hedging to replace this with metal or wooden fencing.

Where a decision is made to repair or replace fencing, the style of fencing offered will be based on value for money which may not be like for like .

Where a customer is identified as being vulnerable, the request for fencing will be assessed in line with their specific needs in order to maintain health and safety.

If we replace front fencing as part of a programme or provide fencing for health and safety reasons then we will repair this fencing subject to budgetary control and individual case management.

Any decision to repair or replace divisional fencing is at the discretion of TGHC and subject to budgetary control and individual case management.

Proposal 8

Recommends a change to the heating and hot water repairs (Winter working policy) from the current approach of upgraded timescales over a 6 month period from 1 November to 30 April.

It is proposed that for tenants with no heating and or hot water we will attend within the urgent category timescale of 3 working days. However, during the winter period (proposed as 1 November to 28 February) we will attend within the emergency category timescale of 24 working hours.

In periods of severe inclement weather, outside of the new proposed dates specified above, TGHC may revert to the winter working policy timescales.

Proposal 9

Provides clarification of working procedures for roofing and scaffolding.

You will be asked when raising a repair if you have any visible signs of water ingress. Roof repairs with no visible signs of water ingress may not require immediate attention. In these instances we may decide inspect the required works.

Should scaffold be required to safely complete a repair then we will communicate timescales with you for the erection and removals of the scaffold. We aim to erect scaffold a maximum of 2 weeks prior to the works starting and remove it within 2 weeks of completion. There may be instances where TGHC are required to inspect the property before or after the works. In these instances scaffold may remain at your property for longer than the timescales stated above.

Upon notification of scaffold it is your responsibility to ensure access and to clear the area of your personal belongings accordingly to an estimated 1.5 meters from your external wall.

While scaffold is in place at your property, satellite television signals may be affected. Please note that TGHC will not be held responsible for this and will not relocate satellite dishes or aerials during this period. Should the position of the satellite dishes or aerials impact on the erection of scaffold to allow a safe working area then TGHC will arrange relocation at no cost to you.

Proposal 10

Provides updated clarification of working procedures regarding job upgrading.

A level of additional priority may be offered to our more vulnerable customers including those who are over the age of 70, have a recognised disability or who have dependent children under the age of 12 months.

Upgrades will be granted where the impact of not completing the repair sooner would have an adverse effect on the person(s). Such upgrades will only be granted in instances of total loss of power, total loss of heating and hot water, to ensure the property is wind/water tight and secure.

Upgrades will not be granted where the repair is in a communal area and there is no significant health and safety risk to a person or the building.

Proposal 11

Ratifies the approach to repairs to electric fires.

The lighting element may fail on an electric fire, this is a common repair fault but does not mean the fire is not functioning correctly. We will aim to repair the lighting element but should this not be possible and the heating element remains in working order then we will not renew the fire. If we are unable to repair the heating element then the fire may be removed and not replaced.

Proposal 12

Seeks to ratify in policy the current responsibilities for pest control charges implemented in June 2016.

TGHC will only be responsible for pest control issues in the following circumstances:

- Communal areas
- Fumigation required in order to undertake works to a property
- Issues with woodworm (or similar wood boring, destructive insects) within a tenants property or communal areas
- Cockroaches and rats inside a property
- Wasps nests blocking vents within the property or overall access to the property

All other pest control issues are the responsibility of the tenant.

Proposal 13

Confirms the approach to Vehicle Crossings (also known as dropped kerbs).

Gateshead Council wishes to encourage residents, wherever possible, to garage or park their vehicles off the road through the provision of vehicle crossings (also known as Dropped Kerbs) to achieve the following benefits:

- Improved road safety
- Reduced damage to paving and therefore improved safety for pedestrians
- Less damage to grass verges on housing estates
- Improved security of vehicles

In order to ensure that vehicle crossings are properly constructed, all domestic vehicle crossings will be built by Construction Services and the service will include the provision of estimates and taking payments.

If you decide to go ahead with the work by Construction Services then written permission must be sought from TGHC to remove the fence, wall or hedge of the property at the place where the crossing will be located before construction can take place. Hardstanding's for a vehicle must not be constructed until permission has been granted and the vehicle crossing installed. We may instruct that you do not park vehicles on the hardstanding until the vehicle crossing work has been fully completed.

In the event that you remove any boundary fencing or walls without permission you will be recharged by TGHC for any work undertaken to replace this and any associated work.

In the event that you damage the public footpath Construction Services will reinstate the footpath or provide a properly constructed crossing. You will be charged for this work.

The construction of a vehicle crossing does not give the occupier of the premises any particular rights, except to drive across the footway to gain access to his/her property with a private or light goods motor car, the crossing itself remains part of the public highway.

Proposal 14

Clarifies the repairs policy for tenants applying to buy their home

If you apply to buy your home, we still have a duty (as your landlord) to carry out maintenance repairs to your home. We will only carry out repairs necessary to keep your home in a 'weatherproof and safe' condition but will not carry out any improvements. Requests for external work will only be undertaken where TGHC evidence that the property is not 'wind and water tight' and a repair is needed

The following repairs may be completed during your Right to Buy application period:

- Total or partial loss of electric power (where within TGHC remit)
- Total or partial loss of gas supply (where within TGHC remit)
- Total or partial loss of water supply (where within TGHC remit)
- Roof leaks/missing tiles or slates showing visible signs of water ingress
- Chimney stack/pots deemed as dangerous after inspection by TGHC
- Unsafe electrical fittings, power or lighting sockets

- No heating and or hot water
- Blocked flue to open fire or boiler
- Blocked or leaking foul drains, soil stacks or toilet pans
- Leaks or flooding from water or heating pipes, tanks or cistern
- Toilet not flushing
- Damaged glazing in line with TGHC recharge policy
- Insecure window, door or locks
- Loose or detached banister or stair treads in line with TGHC Recharge Policy
- Dangerous floorboards or stair treads in line with TGHC Recharge Policy. All reported repairs will be subject to our recharge policy.

TGHC has an obligation to carry out gas servicing on an annual basis until the date that the house is confirmed as sold. Access must be granted until completion of the sale. Failure to grant access could result in delays or withdrawal of the right to buy application.

Where alterations have been completed you must be able to provide evidence of written approvals and certification. Should sufficient evidence not be available then you will be responsible for the costs of any inspections, certification or corrective works.

From the date of purchase when you have bought your home you will be responsible for costs of all repairs and maintenance, regardless of the condition of the property when you bought.

Should you require any further guidance on repair responsibilities during your right to buy application or have a complaint in relation to required works please speak directly with the Councils Right to Buy Officer.

Proposal 15

Updates the make safe policy and the approach to out of hours repairs

The make safe policy relates to all emergency repairs which if not dealt with quickly, could cause injury to the occupants, general public or further damage to the home.

Tenants should contact Home Repairs on telephone: 0800 408 6008 to be given advice on what action to take to make the property safe. Where this advice cannot be actioned by the tenant, neighbour, family or friend an operative will call that day. The operative will make the property safe.

Where the operative makes safe, a return visit will be required to finish the repair. This return visit will be arranged according to the urgency of the repair in line with our timescales. We will aim to complete the repairs and the earliest opportunity. In some cases parts or materials may be required which may delay the repair. In these circumstances the tenant will be advised of progress until the repair is complete.

For tenants that are vulnerable or have specific needs appropriate measures will be taken in addition to the make safe policy. For example temporary heating may be provided in certain circumstances.

If tenants request an out of hours work service that is greater than is considered reasonable, then they will be advised that if the service could have been dealt with

reasonably within normal working hours then they may be required to pay for the service provided.

Details of holiday periods over Christmas and New Year and repair reporting arrangements are published on the TGHC website.

If the reported repairs are not deemed as an emergency then the customer may be asked to call back during normal working hours.

Emergency repairs include:

- Board Up Door Or Window
- Dangerous electrics
- Gas Heating Out Of Order
- Electric Heating Out Of Order
- Pipe Has Burst Inside Property
- Change Lock To Door
- Alarm Sounding Continuously
- Main Drain Blocked
- Loss of power
- Toilet Blocked "Unusable and no alternative"
- Internal Soil Pipe Leaking
- Fumes From Gas Appliance
- Make Safe Wall
- Make Safe Door
- Emergency Lighting Out Of Order
- Refuse Chute Blocked
- Supply Temporary Heating (customer responsible for cost of running)
- Passenger Lift Malfunction (where only one lift exists)

It is your responsibility to pay any associated repair charges for works undertaken by TGHC that are deemed as rechargeable repairs due to neglect, carelessness or deliberate action by you or any visitors to your home (see rechargeable repairs policy).

Proposal 16

Introduces timescales for drainage repairs/access path repairs and communal boilers

Timescales for the above work will be completed in line with the categories proposed in Proposal 2.

Proposal 17

Proposes supplementary wording and guidance on warranties, fixed wall and floor coverings, permissions, condensation, plastering, aids and adaptations, demolition of structures and leaseholders.

a. Warranty Repairs

There are times when items in your home in need of repair are covered by a warranty. Timescales to attend on a warranty repair may sit outside of the category timescales identified in this repair policy. In this instance we will communicate a new timescale to you.

For newly constructed homes the repairs will be completed by the original contractor for a designated period of time. You should continue to report your repairs to TGHC, at which point we will arrange for the required works direct with the contractor. In this instance we will communicate a new timescale to you.

b. Fixed Wall and Floor Coverings

We advise our customers not to install fixed wall or floor coverings (tile, hardwood or laminate) in their homes. This is due to the difficulty in removing them to complete repair works such as under floor pipework repairs.

Where tenants have installed fixed wall or floor coverings they are responsible for ensuring they have been installed correctly with a sufficient sound barrier and for removing them to allow repairs deemed as essential by TGHC.

Should you decide to end your tenancy with us then it will be your responsibility to remove such wall or floor coverings. You will be charged if you do not complete the required works to an acceptable standard.

c. Permission Requests

All alterations to fixtures, fittings and appliances to your home are subject to permission being pre-agreed in writing by TGHC. Customers must seek permission in all instances prior to any work being completed.

Where written permission has been granted then after 12 months of approved installation and subject to the work being completed to an acceptable standard then TGHC may accept responsibility for the installation and carry out all repairs in line with this policy. Please note TGHC will not be held responsible for all repairs after permissions (reference Proposal 6). Repairs and or replacements will be completed to standard specifications and not like for like.

Whenever you carry out work you must make sure that it is carried out to a good standard. You are required to contact your Housing Office upon completion of the approved works. In some instances an inspection of the works may be completed by a TGHC representative. If it is not completed to an acceptable standard then you will be liable to pay the cost of any subsequent work.

d. Condensation

This is caused by moisture from inside the home coming into contact with a colder surface and turning to water droplets. These can then soak into décor and attract mould.

Condensation is more commonly found on external or internal walls, ceilings and windows. Black spot mould growth can often be the most obvious indication of condensation.

If you have mould caused by condensation you should:

- Remove as much mould as you can with a damp cloth and throw away after use - do not brush mould as this releases spores into the air
- Wipe down affected areas using a fungicidal wash (available from DIY stores)
- After treatment redecorate using a fungicidal paint or wallpaper paste – do not use ordinary paint
- Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets

You should help prevent condensation by:

- Leave any fixed vents clear and open to allow constant ventilation
- Additional ventilation may be needed at different times of day, eg when cooking or bathing. Open windows for a short time to allow moisture to escape
- If you have extractor fans make sure you use them and they work correctly
- Keep your kitchen and bathroom doors closed during and just after cooking or bathing. This will reduce moisture spreading to other parts of the property
- Use pan lids when cooking to reduce the amount of moisture released into the air
- Avoid drying clothes on radiators as this greatly increases the amount of moisture in your home
- If you have to dry clothes indoors, hang your washing on an airer and open the windows so moisture can escape
- Allow air to circulate around your rooms by not putting furniture tight against the wall
- Do not overfill cupboards and make sure air can circulate in them
- Try to maintain a steady temperature of about 15°C throughout the day to avoid cold spots around the property
- Don't block your radiators or heaters with furniture when they are turned on as this reduces how well the central heating operates.

Dampness can be a combination of condensation, a leak or water ingress. TGHC are responsible for the repair of water leaks.

Please visit our website for further information on the management of condensation or to report condensation in your home.

e. Plastering Repairs

All repairs to plasterwork in your home will be patch repairs only. Any repairs required over 2m² will be pre-inspected prior to any works being carried out.

f. Aids and Adaptations

Minor repairs to aids and adaptations previously installed by Gateshead Council will be completed by TGHC. If we are unable to complete a value for money repair and an adaptation is still seen as required then a renewal will be considered in line with Gateshead Council's Adaptations Policy.

g. Demolition of structures

While we will aim to complete repairs to structures such as outhouses and some walls, there may be times where we deem them as uneconomical to repair. In these instances we may decide to safely demolish the structure (base of structure may remain if safe).

Please note that in these instances we will not be held responsible for any provision of a replacement.

h. Water Main Repairs or Renewals

Where a repair or replacement is required to your water main the responsibility for repair may fall with either TGHC or Northumbrian Water. We will liaise with yourself and Northumbrian Water to ensure the repair is completed by the correct person(s).

i. Leaseholders

We are responsible for keeping the structure of the building and any communal areas of your block in good repair.

Under Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 TGHC must consult with leaseholders about work when the potential contribution from an individual leaseholder is going to be more than £250 per repair.

In line with the terms and conditions of your lease you have to pay a share of the cost to complete these repairs.

Should you require more information on types of repairs and who is responsible, please reference the Leaseholders handbook or contact our Leasehold team.

Proposal 18

We will complete ongoing reviews of policies and procedures to ensure that best value and practice is delivered with focus on delivering high performance and customer satisfaction while reducing both demand on the service and the number of visits needed to undertake work.