

Policies & Procedures

Responsive Repairs Policy

1.	Policy Objectives
1.1	<p>The purpose of this Policy is to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure we deliver a first-class repairs service to customers which is effortless to use and convenient for our customers in line with our 2020-25 Customer Promises; and • provide clear guidance to staff about communicating repairs work in a clear and consistent way.
1.2	<p>The Policy supports our Asset Management Strategy in ensuring our housing stock is modern and well-maintained under a <u>proactive</u> approach by: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complying with relevant law and legislation in providing customers with a safe, secure, well-maintained home (i.e. one which is warm and weather tight); • Giving clear advice and guidance around landlord and customer responsibilities, linked to our Service Standards; • Fully engaging and communicating with customers in respect of individual repairs work and our general approach; • Putting customers at the heart of the service; • Providing regular feedback to the Executive Management Team, the Group Board and the Gateway Membership Team around how customers view the service and how we propose to make improvements back to customers; • Making a significant contribution to WCH's objectives of achieving optimal & demonstrable value for money and delivering excellent customer service; • Offering a first class repairs service in the top quartile for customer satisfaction; and • Offering a proactive repairs service.
2.	Legislative & regulatory requirement
2.1	Regulatory
2.1.1	<p><u>Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Home Standard</u></p> <p>(para 1.1) "Registered providers shall:</p> <p>(a) ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section 5 of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard;</p>

	(b) meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded assistance, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard”.
2.1.2	(para 2.2) “Registered providers shall ensure a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas. This should demonstrate an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs, and value for money. The approach should include: responsive and cyclical repairs, planned and capital work, work on empty properties, and adaptations”.
2.2	Legislative
2.2.1	As a social landlord we have a responsibility to ensure we maintain our properties in accordance with the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (section 11) by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping in repair the structure and exterior of the dwelling, including drains, gutters and external pipes • Keeping in repair and proper working order the installations in the dwelling for the supply of water, gas, electricity and for sanitation including basins, sinks, baths and sanitary conveniences • Keeping in repair and proper working order the installation in the dwelling for space and water heating.
2.3	Contractual
2.3.1	<u>WCH Obligations</u>
2.3.1.1	WCH’s repairing obligations in relation to our different groups of customers are summarised in Our Repairs Service Guide, an at-a-glance guide to what’s covered by our repairs service, also available on our website.
2.3.2	<u>Tenants’ Obligations</u>
2.3.2.1	Under our standard form general needs and market rent Tenancy Agreements WCH tenants are required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Keep the interior of their property in good, clean condition (decorating as necessary) and carrying out any minor repair jobs (e.g. replacing floor coverings, toilet seats, plus, broken glass, door handles, fixings, locks, letterboxes, hooks, rails, panelling & smoke alarm batteries); (ii) Keep gardens and communal areas clean and tidy and not cause any pipe or drain blockages; (iii) Allow us access (on reasonable notice) to make repairs / improvements and carry out health and safety (e.g. gas safety) checks and works; and (iv) Report any disrepair or defect to us promptly.
3.	Scope & Definitions
3.1	Scope
3.1.1	This Policy applies to general needs (i.e. on social or affordable rent), market rent, leaseholders and shared owners. These groups are referred to commonly throughout this Policy as “customers” unless the context requires otherwise.
3.2	Definitions

3.2.1	First Time Fix: where a GRT operative attends the property with the correct part and completes the repair on the first visit or on the same day.
3.2.2	Imprest Van Stock: A range of routinely used Materials/consumables stored on our vans for the operative’s convenience, promoting first time fix and reducing travel time.
3.2.3	Emergency Repairs: repairs required in situations which are actually or potentially dangerous or pose an immediate risk to health or safety. They are likely to include situations requiring immediate action to prevent serious damage to the property. Emergency repairs must be completed within 24 hours of being reported unless exceptional circumstances prevent this.
3.2.4	Routine repairs: repairs required in situations which do not pose an immediate threat to tenants, the property or possessions.
3.2.5	Vulnerable Customer: a customer requiring additional support or protection because of age, disability or risk of abuse or neglect – see our Vulnerable Customers Policy.
4.	First Class Repair Service
4.1	In line with our 2020-25 Customer Promises, when a repair is needed we will provide customers with a great experience. Booking a repair will be easy and can be done at any time. We will offer a range of appointment times which work for our customers. We will arrive on time and fix the problem on the first visit on at least nine out of ten occasions.
4.2	Reporting Repairs
4.2.1	Self-Appointing Repairs using Digital Tenancy Service (DTS) Customers can raise a request for a routine repair when they are registered with our online service. Customers have the ability to select, change or cancel the appointment date for the repairs appointment.
4.2.2	Reporting E-mail Customers can report their repair as an online enquiry at www.wcht.org.uk , or e-mail direct to our Customer Service Centre on enquires@wcht.org.uk
4.2.3	Smart Tracking GRT Operatives Customers will have access to track operatives en route to their appointment and send information to assist the GRT operative with access to the repair. Customers will track the identified operative along with a map with the planned journey and progress including traffic updates. Text messages will be sent when the operative has accepted the order, is en Route and arrived on site.
4.2.4	Reporting by Phone We aim to deal with a repair request within one call in a polite and professional manner. Customers can contact our Customer Service Centre on 0800 218 2247 (Freephone) between the hours of 8:30-5:30 Monday to Friday . We’ll call customers back who are calling from their mobile phone if asked. We aim to provide a “live” appointment on the first call but, if we can’t, we will explain why and agree when we will come back to the customer with more information.

4.2.5 We will communicate regularly with the customer throughout the progress of the repair to include any follow-on visits, which will be booked with the customer by the Operative allocated to the job. Text reminders will be sent to the customer the day before the appointment to confirm it.

4.2.6 We will respond to these reports as follows under our Service Standards: -

Service Request	Initial Response Time
In person	24 hrs
By telephone	24 hrs
By email	24 hrs
Via DTS	24 hrs
By letter	5 working days

4.3 **Reporting Emergencies Out of Hours**

Our out of hours service will undertake emergency repairs, with the aim of making the property safe. The out of hours service operates through the week between the hours of **17:30 – 8:30** and over weekends and Bank Holidays.

4.4 **First Time Fix**

4.4.1 We aim to complete at least 80% of repairs as a “First Time Fix” in accordance with our Service Standards. This will increase to 90% by 2025 and will involve work with material suppliers on better stock control and distribution to our GRT.

4.4.2 Where this is not possible however, our Customer Service Centre will confirm this with the customer at the outset either by the onsite operative offering another appointment or our Customer Service Centre doing so as a follow-on within 24 working hrs. For more complex repairs a WCH Surveyor may be required to visit the home.

5. Repairs Priorities

5.1 We will prioritise repairs according to their urgency and customers’ particular needs or vulnerabilities.

- Our aim is to complete repairs within **10 working days** of the repair’s initial report. To ensure this we will: Provide a 24hr, 7 day a week service to report emergencies
- Attend and complete repairs in accordance with our Service Standards
- Offer a choice of appointment times (08:00 to 13:00 & 12:00-17:30, including flexible appointments on Saturday mornings (08:00-12:00) and Thursday evenings until 19:00
- Be flexible around school run, working hours and caring responsibilities.

Further detail can be found in our Vulnerable Customers Policy.

5.2 We will ensure that staff are sufficiently trained in diagnosing and prioritising repair priorities. Dealing with health and safety concerns will always be of paramount importance.

5.3 **General Needs, Market Rent, Older Persons Housing & Flexicare Schemes.**

<p>5.4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Works - attend within 4 hours, make safe and implement a repair within 24 hours. • Appointable repair - available repair slot for non-emergency repairs. <p>Hostels & Temporary Accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Works- attend within 2-4 hours, make safe and implement a repair within 24 hours. • Urgent - a maximum of 7 calendar days • Routine - a maximum of 20 calendar days <p>The repair priorities and what constitutes an emergency, urgent or routine repair are described in more detailed at Appendix 2 – Repair Priorities.</p>
<p>5.5</p>	<p>Communal Maintenance</p> <p>Our Estate Services and Property Services teams will monitor and post-inspect communal area repairs logged to ensure they have been completed to a satisfactory standard and are in accordance to health and safety standards.</p>
<p>5.6</p>	<p>Tenant Alterations or Home Improvements</p> <p>WCH will allow certain alterations and improvements to be undertaken by tenants themselves. Further guidance is set out in the Tenant Alteration Policy.</p>
<p>6. Inspections</p>	
<p>6.1</p>	<p><u>Pre-Inspection</u></p>
<p>6.1.1</p>	<p>A pre-inspection may be undertaken by a GRT Operative, on site by a Multi-Skilled Operative / Team Leader or (where repairs are significant / cannot be diagnosed over the 'phone) by a sub-contractor. Pre-inspections will generally be required where there is/are :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex repairs requiring more than one operative and/or multiple days to complete; • Ongoing damp and condensation issues; • Structural defects (requiring an insurance claim); • Roofing repairs; and • Significant disrepair
<p>6.2</p>	<p><u>Post-Inspection</u></p>
<p>6.2.1</p>	<p>Post inspections are required to ensure that the relevant operative has carried out the repair(s) to the required standard while providing value for money and maintaining an accurate property repair history.</p>
<p>6.2.2</p>	<p>We will post-inspect repairs where customers have rated the quality of the repair as unsatisfactory via the repairs and maintenance survey carried out by the Customer Relations Team. Overall we will complete a minimum of 10% post inspections.</p>
<p>End of Tenancy Visits</p>	
<p>6.3</p>	<p>The Void Team Leader will provide a Schedule to tenants at the end of their Tenancy.</p>
<p>6.3.1</p>	<p>This is a list of required repairs and estimated costs which the tenant is obligated to remedy in accordance with the Tenancy Agreement before returning the keys. When lease arrangements are set up with external organisations such as Watford Borough</p>

	Council a Condition Schedule will be produced and agreed with the other party, to assist with the end of lease negotiations.
7.	Health & Safety
7.1	Ensuring the safety of all works carried out by our staff or contractors is of paramount importance to us. We undertake regular site audits in conjunction with the Health & Safety Officer to ensure staff and contractors have adopted and implemented safe working practices through our management systems. This includes either reviewing; method statements, risk assessments or checks to ensure our own staff are following correct protocols. We will randomly select sites where works are in progress in communal areas or within individual dwellings.
7.2	WCH has an obligation to deal with improvement notices served under the Housing Health and Safety Ratings Systems (HHSRS) administered by local authorities. Where notices are served, the Repairs Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the matter is brought to a satisfactory conclusion within the statutory timescales. These will be reported to the Head of Maintenance Services.
8.	Lack of Access
8.1	No access by the customer will result in a charge being levied in line with the Tenant Recharge Policy. If the works are of an emergency nature we will continue to try to make contact with the customer to gain access.
9.	Insurance
9.1	Tenants are responsible under their Tenancy Agreement for ensuring they have sufficient home insurance cover for their contents and personal belongings. WCH offers low cost home contents insurance through a 3rd party provider, which tenants are routinely encouraged to take up.
9.2	All WCH buildings are insured against damage. Where damage occurs to the building which is covered by our insurance policy we will pursue a claim as appropriate. We will deal with insurance claims as swiftly as possible however it is recognised that remedial action with regards to structural defects can take a significant amount of time to resolve.
9.3	If damage occurs due to negligence of a repairs operative, we will claim under WCH's relevant insurance policies. We will also track and monitor deliberate damage or non-recoverable insurance claims.
10.	Asset Investment Model
10.1	WCH seeks to reduce the volume of responsive repairs through ongoing, effective planned maintenance of, and investment in, our housing stock. Information collected during our regular surveys on the condition of our residential properties is collated with information on the number and frequency of repairs to properties to inform planned works programmes. The planning and timing of these programmes is designed to ensure elements such as kitchens and bathrooms are renewed within their expected lifespan, reducing the need for responsive repairs. The system will also identify properties where the cost of maintenance outweighs its financial and social value flagging the asset for potential disposal again reducing the numbers of maintenance heavy properties.
10.2	We will analyse and benchmark our data for any trends relating to our properties in conjunction with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High cost properties • High frequency of repairs

<p>10.3</p> <p>10.4</p> <p>10.5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average cost of repairs per property • Trade analysis • Time priority allocation • Spend profile • Resource Allocation • Material Usage <p>This data will be cross-referenced with our stock condition data to examine any correlation with planned investment required. Neighbouring properties will also be examined from a responsive repairs basis to ascertain whether the property requires investment or the behaviour of the tenant needs to be reviewed via a tenancy audit.</p> <p>Our Customer Relations Team will also monitor and report weekly & monthly performance for customer repairs & maintenance satisfaction. We will continue to investigate and resolve reasons for dissatisfaction.</p> <p>All customers will receive an electronic satisfaction survey upon their repair being completed. We are committed to being transparent with our customers about our satisfaction levels and clear around what we are doing to raise performance. We routinely benchmark our service offer and customer satisfaction against comparable organisations within our sector as well as the private sector to improve our service.</p>
11.	New Build Repairs
<p>11.1</p> <p>11.2</p>	<p>Customers can report repairs required to new build properties in the normal ways, outlined at section 4. Repairs reported during the first year of the development's completion ("the Rectification Period") will be passed to the relevant development contractor to remedy. The repair will be recorded on our housing management system and their volume and outcome monitored by our Partnerships team.</p> <p>After the Rectification Period : -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) latent/hidden defects will be managed through the relevant guarantees by the Property Services team. Customers will be advised of the probable timescales relevant to the defect; and (ii) all other repairs will be completed as Routine or Emergency Repairs as normal under this Policy.
12.	Diversity & Inclusion
<p>12.1</p>	<p>WCH is committed to ensuring equal access to all of the Group's services in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and our duties under the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. These require registered providers to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) remove barriers in accordance with our obligations as a service provider under the Equality Act 2010 ; and (ii) meet the individual needs of our tenants in accordance with the regulatory Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (para 2.1), for instance those who are vulnerable or living in our Older Persons Housing or Flexicare schemes.
13.	Person Responsible
	<p>The Director of Operations retains overall responsibility for this Policy; oversight of its operational delivery is delegated to the Head of Maintenance Services.</p>
14.	Appendices
	<p>Appendix 2 – Repairs Priority</p>

15.	Approval
	Approved by : EMT, GMT and Operations Committee
	Dates of approval : EMT 9 Jan 2020 : GMT 22 Jan 2020 : Operations Committee 30 March 2020
	Review date : March 2022
	Policy 'owners' : Director of Operations & Head of Maintenance Services

Appendix 2 – Repairs Priority

Emergency Works apply to situations which involve a serious risk to health or safety or the condition of a property as follows:	
1	Loss of entire supply of electricity, water
2	Loss of part supply e.g. no lights, no drinking water
3	Loss of entire heating provision in cold weather, typically between 1st October and 31st April dependent on temperature or where the tenant is elderly, disabled or chronically sick, or has children under 5 or children or a member of the household is disabled or chronically sick
4	Loss of hot water facilities where tenants' health necessitates regular bathing
5	All serious plumbing or gas leaks where the fabric is in danger of damage (see Appendix 1 for further clarification of responsibility)
6	Serious roof leaks (not containable) and other major structural failures (weather dependant)
7	Securing of property following incident of violence, fire, police activity, or where Property becomes Void (crime reference number required) Recharge form to be used where damage is caused by the resident
8	Blocked WC when sole WC in dwelling
Note:	All gas leaks/major electrical faults are to be checked with the Service Supplier first.

These are non-exhaustive examples.

Where a situation arises which is clearly an Emergency because of the customer's circumstances (e.g. new born baby, disabilities etc.,) but is not covered by the above, appropriate action should be taken accordingly based on the risk and situation.

Routine Works are those which do not pose an immediate threat to tenants, their possessions or the property as follows:-

1	Minor repairs to a door-entry system or TV aerial
2	Minor leaks and blockage

3	Renewing a broken bath, basin or toilet	These are non-exhaustive examples
4	Repairing or replacing sockets or light fittings (unless exposed wires)	
5	Routine glazing	
6	Replacing emergency boarding	
7	Minor joinery repairs	
8	A block toilet where there is another toilet in the property A toilet not flushing (only toilet in property) A blocked sink, bath, shower or basin (tenant to try to unblock) No Hot water	
9	Minor plumbing faults	
10	Gutters	
11	Plastering	
12	Flooring or tiles	
13	Roofing i.e. slipped tiles	