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## Policy Statement – Foreword

At Lewisham Council we are committed to delivering excellent customer service and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. In terms of our Housing repairs service this means we will:

- Listen to what our residents are telling us – as well as responding to repair requests and complaints, we also proactively request feedback by way of satisfaction surveys and resident forums
- Comply with all our legal and contractual obligations, and regulatory standards including the relevant consumer standards
- Hold ourselves accountable by monitoring and reporting our performance. This is achieved by splitting the delivery of services from the monitoring teams
- Measure ourselves against other customer centred organisations – both inside and outside of the housing sector
- Provide a reliable and accessible service that meets our residents' expectations
- Consistently deliver high-quality work that represents value for money
- Deliver the majority of non-specialist general repairs works directly through our in-house Repairs Service

We want our residents to be happy in their homes and with the services we offer, and we know our responsive repairs service is one of the most important of these. A reliable repairs and maintenance service keeps residents safe, secure and comfortable in their homes. We are committed to a modern and efficient approach to repairs that provides our residents with a flexible, convenient, and customer-oriented service.



### 1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1 Lewisham Council own and manage a large number of tenanted, leasehold and licenced residential properties.
- 1.2 This document sets out our policy with regard to our repairing responsibilities for communal areas shared by all residents, as well as our repairing responsibilities for individual tenanted properties. It also confirms tenant, leaseholder, and shared owner repair responsibility in line with the terms of their tenancy or lease.
- 1.3 For the purpose of this document, when referring to leaseholders, tenants, shared owners and other types of tenure collectively we will use the terms residents, though this may also include non-resident leaseholders. Where we specifically use a term such as 'tenant' or 'leaseholder' we are referring to someone with a contract for that particular type of tenure.
- 1.4 This policy supports our housing strategy which states a priority of improving the quality, standard and safety of housing in Lewisham.
- 1.5 Health and Safety is a top priority for us with. As such we embed it into the way we deliver our repairs service – with an expectation that all who deliver on our behalf will work safely, remain aware of risks, and will report incidents and concerns promptly.

### 2. Legislation, Regulation and Standards

- 2.1 We comply with all relevant legislation and often exceed statutory requirements. This legislation includes but is not limited to:
  - The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
  - Defective premises Act 1972
  - Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
  - The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), introduced under the Housing Act 2004
  - Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and supporting regulations
  - Building Regulations Act 1984
- 2.2 Right to Repair: This is a statutory compensation scheme which gives secure council tenants a contractual right to have certain qualifying repairs completed within a prescribed period of time or receive a prescribed amount of compensation where we fail to meet the conditions.
- 2.3 Pre-action protocol for Housing condition claims (updating the previous protocol for Housing Disrepair): Claims and notifications will be managed according to a separate policy and process which has been written to comply with the protocol and relevant legislation. The protocol is built on the understanding that repairs have been reported to the landlord, and will expect there to be evidence of reasonable effort from both landlord and resident to achieve a repair resolution prior to legal action.
- 2.4 More information regarding legislation for specific areas of our work can be found in specific related safety policies covering gas, electricity, asbestos, fire safety, legionella, lifts etc. (See also Section 10 Related documents).



- 2.5 The Regulator of Social Housing sets consumer standards, which Lewisham Council, in our role as a social housing provider, are expected to meet. Our policy and associated processes are reviewed in line with such standards. This includes:
- Our provision of a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service;
  - Balancing cyclical maintenance, planned and responsive repairs;
  - Meeting all applicable statutory health and safety requirements; and
  - Aiming to get repairs right first time wherever possible.
- 2.6 Contractual responsibilities for repair are as set out in the relevant tenancy agreement(s), licence, or lease. More detailed information regarding repairing responsibilities is also explained in our policies, guides, and website.
- 2.7 We will consult with residents and other stakeholders to agree other voluntary standards and charters that relate to how we deliver our repairs service. Where these are in place over and above our statutory and regulatory obligations, we will aim to meet this additional level of service, and will regularly review them with residents to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate.

### 3. All residents

- 3.1 Lewisham Council will provide a range of methods for residents to report repairs. While telephone reporting will remain a central part of our offering, we will encourage a shift to digital channels such as email and via our residents' portal. Expansion of digital channel reporting will allow residents to self-serve and to report repairs 24/7. We will continue to provide an out of hour's telephone service to report emergency repairs.
- 3.2 All authorised operatives, including any contractors working in our behalf, will carry identification and will follow an agreed code of conduct. Operatives are expected to treat residents and their homes with respect and courtesy.
- 3.3 Where we have a repairs responsibility, reported repairs will be logged and ordered promptly. When a resident reports a repair in their home, we will seek to offer them a fixed appointment for the work at the point of first contact. When working on an individual property we will always provide residents with an appointment<sup>1</sup>. Where we miss an appointment, we will contact the resident to apologise and rearrange the visit.
- 3.4 We will adopt a 'right first time' approach, where we proactively manage repairs, and the resident does not have to chase works. Wherever practicable, we aim to complete repairs in a single visit to both minimise disruption and deliver an efficient service.
- 3.5 If we need to carry out an inspection before ordering a repair, we will be clear that this is the reason for the visit, and will arrange any follow on works promptly. Where works cannot be completed in a single visit, we will proactively schedule appointments for follow up visits and keep the resident informed. Operatives are encouraged to be proactive in carrying out repairs and, at times if necessary, will go beyond the scope of the reported repair to negate the need for a future repair, minimise recalls, and ensure homes remain in a good state of repair.

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<sup>1</sup> Exception may be required for emergency access



### 4. Communal repairs

- 4.1 Where Lewisham Council is responsible<sup>2</sup> for the management of the internal and external common parts of a residential building, we will keep these in a good and defect-free state of repair. Working with our partners in the community, we also seek to ensure our neighbourhoods remain safe and secure.
- 4.2 We encourage residents to assist by identifying and promptly reporting communal repairs issues to us, such as broken lights, lifts, door entry systems, and vandalism. Communal repairs are also reported by Lewisham Council staff who may visit or work within buildings, such as our caretakers. Repairs may also be identified and reported by the designated Building Safety Manager in buildings that are covered by this team.
- 4.3 We seek to be proactive in identifying and completing communal repairs. Where works are carried out, we will ensure we have good records, and preferably photographic evidence, of the completed repair.

### 5. Tenanted properties

#### Our obligations

- 5.1 Our Lettable standard sets out the minimum standards and repair condition that tenants can expect from their property at the point of let. Variations of the lettable standard are in place that apply to specific accommodation such as sheltered housing.
- 5.2 We will provide tenants with information about how to use fittings provided in their home and to keep the home in good repair. For example, advice regarding the use of heating and ventilation to help reduce the occurrence of condensation and damp, or in using monitoring devices.
- 5.3 We will confirm any work that tenants are responsible for, and/or advise where a repair or appointment will be rechargeable.
- 5.4 When working on an individual property we will always give tenants an appointment. The table below sets out our repair priorities and response times.

Repairs priorities and Response times		
Emergency (E)	Within 24 hours	For repairs that remove immediate danger to people, avoid flooding or major damage to the property; make the property secure; restore total failure of sanitation; water or electrical supply, or total loss of heating in winter. We will complete the repair at the time, if we can. If we cannot, we will make the situation safe and carry out any follow-up work as an urgent or routine repair in normal working hours.
Urgent (U)	Within 3 working days	For urgent work to prevent damage to the property, or where there is a possible health, safety or security risk. Includes partial failure of sanitation; water or electrical supply; and heating systems.
Routine (20)	Within 20 working days	Other repairs work that does not fall into the emergency and urgent categories above.

<sup>2</sup> For buildings where we are a leaseholder but do not have responsibility for the common parts, we will liaise with the relevant building manager when required.



- 5.5 While much of the time, we expect to be well within our target response times, occasionally completion of work may fall outside of these times. Examples include:
- Completing follow-up work that could not be achieved in a single visit;
  - Coordinating works involving multiple trades or contractors;
  - Poor weather conditions preventing external works;
  - Where a repair requires us to negotiate access through a property owned or managed by a third party;
  - Inspections to make a diagnosis to initiate a repair or to order materials;
  - Where we need to order a specialist material or specialist contractor to complete the repair;
  - Proactive monitoring of an ongoing and complex repair such as a damp or structural issue.
- 5.6 Where we are unable to complete a repair on a single visit, or within our expected timeframes, we will proactively keep the tenant updated with progress including arrangements for repeat or rearranged visits.

### Tenant obligations

- 5.7 Tenants must give all authorised employees and agents of the Council reasonable access<sup>3</sup> to their home to inspect or carry out any work. This is a legal requirement and a condition of the tenancy. Tenants may be charged for the cost of subsequent legal action arising from our need to gain access.
- 5.8 Tenants must keep their home in good condition and take reasonable steps to prevent damage, deterioration, safety issues, and infestation. If a tenant fails to look after their property, or break conditions of the tenancy agreement, we may carry out work and recharge the tenant all reasonably incurred costs.
- 5.9 Tenants are required to report all repairs and defects in and around their home to us promptly, except for those that they are responsible for. For detailed information regarding tenant repair responsibilities see the tenancy agreement or licence, and our Repairs guide.
- 5.10 If a tenant wants to make improvements and alterations to their home, they must get our written permission before doing any work, and must use a suitably qualified person to carry out work. (See our Alterations and Improvements policy).
- 5.11 Tenants are responsible for any replacements or repairs necessary due to damage caused by themselves or their household, their visitors, or any third party they have employed (fair wear and tear excepted). This applies whether the damage was caused deliberately or by negligence. Tenants may be required to pay for any damage caused to their home or any other property caused by their own conduct, appliances, or equipment.
- 5.12 Tenants are expected to have adequate contents insurance in place and Lewisham Council will not generally compensate tenants for losses, unless directly the result of our negligence or that of our contractors. For more information see our Compensation, reimbursement and remedies policy.

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<sup>3</sup> We classify as 'no access' where a responsible adult is not present to provide entry



- 5.13 A tenant may be asked to clear an area or lift up a floor covering to allow us access to carry out work. If we assist with this, we are not responsible for putting things back in place or for any damage incurred, unless it is caused by neglect by our repair workers.

## 6. Leasehold and shared ownership properties

- 6.1 The individual lease sets out a leaseholder/shared owner's repair and maintenance responsibilities. Further detail is set out in the Leasehold guide<sup>4</sup>. Where required we will take action to legally enforce the lease.
- 6.2 The premises, as defined in the shared ownership lease, does not include the front door. For these properties, Lewisham Council will repair and maintain the front door of the property and recharge the leaseholder.
- 6.3 Under the terms of the lease a leaseholder/shared owner is required to give all authorised employees and agents of the Lessor access when required. (See also our Required Access policy). We may ask a resident to clear an area or lift up a floor covering to allow us access to carry out work. If we assist with this, we are not responsible for putting things back in place or for any damage incurred, unless it is caused by neglect by our repair workers.
- 6.4 If a leaseholder or shared owner wants to make improvements and alterations to their home, they must get our written permission before doing any work, and use a suitably qualified person to carry out work. (See our Alterations and Improvements policy).
- 6.5 Leaseholders and shared owners are responsible for any replacements or repairs necessary due to damage caused by themselves, their household, their visitors, or any third party they have employed. This applies whether the damage was caused deliberately or by negligence. They will be required to pay for any damage caused to their home or any other property caused by their own conduct, appliances, or equipment.

### Insurance

- 6.6 Leaseholders are expected to have adequate building insurance in place.

**Note:** Lewisham Council takes out buildings insurance for shared ownership blocks including the premises. Each shared owner within the block pays a portion towards this insurance with their service charges.

- 6.7 Leaseholders and Shared owners are expected to have adequate contents insurance in place. Lewisham Council will not generally compensate for losses unless directly the result of our negligence or that of our contractors. For more information see our Compensation, reimbursement and remedies policy.

## 7. Performance monitoring and reporting

- 7.1 We will maintain clear and accurate repair records, which will be kept in line with our data protection policy.

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<sup>4</sup> Leasehold guide was being updated at the time of this document's reappraisal



- 7.2 We will maintain and monitor a set of agreed performance indicators and targets, which are reported to our Executive Team. We will also publicise our headline performance measures to our residents via our website and newsletters.
- 7.3 We will use feedback from residents, including surveys and complaints, to help us monitor and improve our performance. We will collect satisfaction data and report our performance regularly to Executive Team.
- 7.4 We will benchmark our performance and value for money against other providers, which includes recognised benchmarking (for example via Housemark), and we will report how we compare to our Executive Team.
- 7.5 We report repairs performance results to our Executive team. We report to residents by publishing performance information on our website and in publications, such as our annual report.
- 7.6 We will conduct sample qualitative and financial checks on the works carried out by all major repairs suppliers, including our in-house Repairs services. Suppliers will be managed in accordance with their contractual terms and our Procurement processes.
- 7.7 We will monitor and review our performance in connection with this policy with the objective of continual improvement. We will examine how we perform against agreed targets and performance indicators, and consider what we can learn from identified repair patterns and complaints. We will also measure ourselves against peer organisations and adopt sector learning and good practice wherever possible.
- 7.8 We will work toward the longer-term goal of increasing proactive maintenance, inspection, and replacement, to help us drive down reliance on reactive repairs, wherever it is practicable and reasonable for us to make such changes.
- 7.9 This policy will be reviewed in the light of any changing legislation or regulation, or organisational requirements.

## 8. Communication and consultation

- 8.1 This policy will be published on our website, along with other detailed or specific repairs information, as required. We received feedback from residents which helped us to shape this policy. We will continue to consult with residents when reviewing material which explains or underpins this policy.
- 8.2 We regularly request and receive feedback from our residents, including ongoing satisfaction monitoring of repairs, and analysis of complaints. This helps shape our approach. We also specifically consult on changes to our services, standards, policies and processes.
- 8.4 Complaints involving repairs will be handled in line with our complaints policy, which is published on our website. We aim to resolve such complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman's recommended three-pronged approach – i.e., to act fairly, put things right, and to learn from outcomes.



### 9. Equality, diversity, and inclusion

- 9.1 An Equality Analysis Assessment was carried out during the development of this policy, and which will also be reviewed during the development of implementation processes. The assessment did not reveal any reason not to proceed and has no assessed negative impact for any protected characteristic. By setting out our existing policy clearly it aims to benefit all residents.
- 9.2 We ask residents to inform us if they have a condition that may be impacted by our carrying out a repair. We have built flexibility into our service to help us consider where we can reasonably adjust a service if a need is identified that may require an alternative solution or an exception to policy. For example, adjusting a timeframe, using a different product, or agreeing to waive a chargeable cost.
- 9.3 We have other policies and processes in place, which work alongside this policy where there is a need identified and criteria have been met. These include, for example, the provision of aids and adaptations, decoration, and safety and security measures.

### 10. Related documents

Some of our related documents include but are not limited to:

- Required Access policy
- Alterations and Improvement policy
- Rechargeable costs policy
- Aids and adaptations
- Compensation, reimbursement and remedies policy

<b>Replaces:</b> Repairs policy 2021 (Lewisham Homes) Minor updates to reflect the return of landlord services previously managed by Lewisham Homes to Lewisham Council	
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<b>Policy owner:</b> Director of Housing Quality and Investment	