



Gravesham Borough Council

Housing Repairs & Maintenance Policy

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1. Introduction

DSO Building Management is responsible for carrying out various works to or around Gravesham Borough Council owned housing and is divided into two distinct departments, Responsive Repairs and Asset Management. The work of these two departments will fall into one of the following categories:

- Responsive Repairs
- Planned Works
- Cyclical & Compliancy Works
- Void Works

Responsive Repairs - A responsive repair is a repair reported by or on behalf of a resident, and is a repair to something that is already present within or around the property. These repairs are normally something that can't wait and therefore cannot be planned or included in a longer-term investment programme.

Planned Works – Planned Works are those which are carried out when a component of the property (e.g. a kitchen, a roof, a boiler) has reached the end of its estimated lifecycle and needs replacing. In addition to information held on our systems, information obtained from the Stock Condition Survey that we carry out on a regular basis is also used to create these programmes. Disabled adaptations are included in the planned work programmes.

Cyclical & Compliancy Works - Cyclical works are those that are carried on a periodic timeframe (e.g. external redecorations and servicing) and Compliancy is a term used to describe maintenance works and repairs which are required to meet any regulatory, legislative or Health & Safety requirements (e.g. Gas servicing, Electrical Testing, Legionella, Fire Protection, Stair Lifts etc.).

Void Works - Void works is a term used to cover all works required to bring an empty property to a re-let standard before a new resident moves into the property. This is in line with the council's re-let standard policy. This could be a new or improved property, where a previous tenant has given notice, an abandoned property or a property becoming vacant following the death of a tenant.

2. Scope and Standards for the policy

Gravesham Borough Council aims to provide a Building Management Service that:

- Meets high standards of customer service
- Ensures that properties are repaired to a reasonable standard
- Ensures that planned works programmes are scheduled appropriately and within budget
- Ensures that cyclical and compliancy works are completed within time
- Fulfils its statutory duties and complies with the laws regarding repairs and maintenance.
- Gives value for money and is sustainable

To achieve this, the council will:

- Meet our commitments within the Council's corporate plan.
- Carry out repairs in one visit where possible.
- Arrange appointments to inspect and carry out work where necessary.
- Set appropriate standards for the quality of work of our staff and our contractors.
- Ensure that repairs and maintenance work is carried out in accordance with health and safety legislation.
- Operate a system of quality assurance through the use of pre and post inspection by suitably qualified staff, and by conducting tenant satisfaction surveys.
- Consult with residents where needed and possible
- Publish planned works and servicing programmes
- Set and regularly monitor key performance targets
- Continually monitor and manage the repairs and maintenance budget
- Continually monitor and performance manage contractors

The policy will be reviewed and revised on an annual basis.

3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is based on our legal obligations as a landlord and the Tenancy Conditions. The main legislation related to this policy is listed below:

- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985,
- Environmental Protection Act 1990,
- The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Control of Legionella – ACoP L8, INDG 458, HSG 274
- Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2012
- Lift Operations and Lift Equipment Regulations (LOLER) 1998
- Electrical Safety at Work Regulations 1989
- Gas Safety (Management) Regulations 1996
- Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1992)
- Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) 1998
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health regulations 2002
- Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992
- Confined Spaces Regulations 1997

The council has also considered guidance contained in the Housing Disrepair Legal Obligations – Good Practice Guide issued by the government in 2002.

4. Tenants' duties and responsibilities

The repairs that the tenant is responsible for are defined by the Housing Act 1988 and the Council's Tenancy Conditions.

In accordance with the tenancy conditions tenants are responsible for the following inside the property:

Maintaining and repairing the inside of the property including:

- Internal doors and catches, including cupboards
- Internal glazing
- Internal fittings, including skirting boards, door and window frames, bath panels, toilet seats, plugs and chains to sinks and baths, curtain rails and pelmets
- Internal decorations and finishes
- Plumbing to washing machines, dishwashers and so on, unless these have been fitted by the council
- Doors and drawers to kitchen units
- Letter boxes
- Any items the tenant, their family or visitors have damaged, even those that are the responsibility of the council.
- Repairs to their own improvements
- Replacing tap washers where taps are dripping
- Replacing light bulbs and fluorescent tubes
- Lock changes and replacing keys/fobs
- Damp and mould as a result of lifestyle / poor heating and ventilation

Tenants are also responsible for maintaining and repairing elements relating to the outside of the property including:

- Their own equipment, such as TV aerials (unless provided by the council), satellite dishes and electrical sockets

- Repairs to sheds
- Back garden paths
- Fencing repairs unless they meet the criteria of the fencing policy found at section 30 of this policy.

5. Landlord's Repair Responsibilities

Gravesham Borough Council is responsible for keeping the structure and outside of the property in good repair, including:

- External walls, external doors, external window frames and sills;
- Drains, gutters, external pipes;
- Access paths and steps to individual properties;
- The roof and chimney (but not sweeping);
- The internal structure
- External decoration

Keeping in a good state of repair and proper working order:

- Installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity and sanitation. The service up to and including the gas and electrical meter is the responsibility of the service provider, unless the mains supply outside the home is owned by the council
- Installations for room and water heating fitted by the council
- Lifts, rubbish chutes and shared lighting serving the building or estate.
- Disabled adaptations that have been installed by the council (if the person for whom the adaptation was originally fitted no longer resides in the property, or the adaptation is no longer required, the council reserves the right to decide on an appropriate solution)
- Fences and gates which are the council's responsibility to maintain and serves a purpose.

A repairs responsibility chart can be found at Appendix 1

The council will not repair or replace a part or item if the tenant has removed it from the property without giving the council the opportunity to repair it, for example a door that needs replacing but has been disposed of.

6. Right to Buy

The council has no obligation to carry out certain repairs and maintenance work once a property is subject to a Right to Buy Application and will only carry out emergency or urgent works to property. These are limited to repairs required by law:

- Repairing and maintaining the structure and exterior of the property
- The landlord's heating and hot water appliances
- Pipes and wiring within the property
- Sanitary ware

We will only place repair orders for repairs needed by law (see section 7). Repairs taking place that are not needed by law will not be completed. Generally repairs outstanding or underway at completion of the sale will be cancelled.

The property will also be removed from any future improvement programmes.

7. The Right to Repair

The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right-to-Repair) Regulations 1994 came into force on 01 April 1994. It places an obligation on landlords to carry out some small urgent repairs if they are likely to affect someone's health, safety or security.

Right to repair only includes repairs that cost less than £250. These are described in law as ‘qualifying repairs’ and must be carried out in within a set time limit (see the table below). The time limits do not apply if the cost of the repair is more than £250.

If the repair is not carried out within set time limits, then the tenant has the right to ask the council to get an alternative contractor to do the work.

If the second contractor does not complete the work within the extra time allowed, compensation may be payable. The compensation is fixed by the legislation at £10, plus £2 for every day that the repair is not finished, up to a limit of £50.

If a tenant asks for a qualifying repair to be carried out under the Regulations then the council will issue a repair notice detailing:

- The tenant's name
- Their address
- Who will be carrying out the repair
- The nature of the repair
- The date by which the repair should be completed.

Defect	Prescribed Period (working days)
Total loss of electric power	1
Partial loss of electric power	3
Unsafe power or lighting socket, or electrical fitting	1
Total loss of water supply	1
Partial loss of water supply	3
Total or partial loss of gas supply	1
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 31st October and 1st May	1
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 30th April and 1st November	3
Blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack, or (where there is no other working toilet in the dwelling-house) toilet pan	1
Toilet not flushing (where there is no other working toilet in the dwelling-house)	1
Blocked sink, bath or basin	3
Tap which cannot be turned	3
Leaking from water or heating pipe, tank or cistern	1
Leaking roof	7
Insecure external window, door or lock	1
Loose or detached bannister or hand rail	3
Rotten timber flooring or stair tread	3
Door entryphone not working	7
Mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working	7

The Right to Repair **does not** apply in the following circumstances:

- Where the resident has confirmed to the council that they no longer want the qualifying repair carried out

- Where the resident fails to provide details for the council / contractor to gain access to their home
- Access for an inspection or for the repair to be carried out has not been provided
- Where the council / contractor needs to order special parts to complete the repair
- Where severe weather conditions prevent the contractor from completing the repair
- Leaseholder properties

8. Rechargeable Repairs

Gravesham Borough Council strives to ensure that all of our properties are repaired and maintained to provide a safe home environment for our tenants, making sure that day to day repairs are carried out on time and efficiently whilst still maintaining value for money. Where repairs are not attributed to fair wear and tear they will be treated as rechargeable. Costs recovered will help improve our services and properties which will ultimately benefit our tenants.

The council will recover the cost of repairs that need to be carried out that are rechargeable due to damage, neglect, misuse or abuse by tenants, their family, pets or visitors to their property.

Where damage or neglect has occurred (for which the tenant is responsible) the tenant can arrange for the damage to be repaired themselves. However, if this does not meet current health and safety, building regulation requirements or, in the case of gas and electricity, the current legislation, the council will carry out further works and charge the tenant the additional costs. In addition, the council will not be liable if a tenant has installed a defective system, fixtures or fittings without permission and may carry out and charge for repairs considered necessary for health and safety reasons or in situations of emergency, arising from the misuse of the property.

The council will continually make sure that tenants are aware of their obligations not to damage or neglect their property; this is formally agreed with the tenant when the Tenancy Agreement is signed.

Further information regarding recharges can be found in the Council's rechargeable Repairs Policy.

9. Reporting a Responsive Repair

For responsive repairs, our aim is to arrange an appointment during the first contact with the resident and complete the repair in one visit. If the work is being carried out by a contractor, they will contact the tenant direct to arrange an appointment.

During core hours (8.45am to 5pm) we operate a Repairs Administration Office, through which all repair requests must be made.

The council will aim to ensure that all urgent and routine repairs (with the exception of specialist work requiring contact with a third party) will be made by appointment with the resident. Residents may report repairs by any of the following means:

- By telephone on 01474 337777
- By email housing.repairs.team@gravesham.gov.uk
- On the Councils website www.gravesham.gov.uk/repairs
- In person at the Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 1AU

When a tenant contacts us to report a repair, we will take the following steps:

- We will check the contact details, including telephone and email address and ensure we are talking to the correct tenant
- We will log the repair, so we can track its progress until it is completed.
- We will ask the tenant for a detailed description of the repair, the more detail we have the better chance we have of fixing the repair on our first visit.
- We will establish who is responsible for putting the problem right, if it is the council's responsibility we will assess the priority of the repair
- Rechargeable repair – we will let the tenant know and take a deposit for payment from the tenant.

- If not a responsive repair then it will be referred to the Asset Management Team.

10. Priorities and response times

Responsive Repairs

- **Emergency** – We will respond within 24 hours and make safe (including out of hours). This category is used when there is an immediate danger to a person or serious risk of damage to the property. A follow up appointment will be booked if further work is required.
- **Right to Repair** – We will respond within the legislative guidelines. This category is used when the repair being reported is listed within the guidelines. The tenant will be advised at what time and date they should ensure their property is accessible.
- **Routine** – We will book an appointment with the tenant at a convenient time, and within 28 working days. Follow-up work may require an additional appointment.

If it is not a Responsive Repair then it is likely to be a planned Works Programme, further information can be found at section 23 of this policy.

11. Appointments and times

An appointment will be offered for responsive repairs that are in the 'right to repair' or 'routine' categories and we will endeavour to complete the repair on the first visit. There may be circumstances when this is not possible.

For right to repair issues, there are time frames that need to be adhered to, and therefore an appointment will be allocated and the tenant will be expected to make themselves available. Failure to allow access to the council or contractor at the allocated appointment time will mean the right to repair will no longer apply and the tenant will be unable to claim compensation.

Appointments are available Monday to Saturday for the completion of repairs along with pre and post inspections. The following options will be given:

- Morning: 8:30am to 1pm
- Afternoon: 1pm to 4pm
- Evening: 4pm to 7pm (Monday to Thursday only, 6:30pm Friday)

Tenants must make sure that they or another responsible adult is present at the appointed time so that we can access the property and carry out the repair. A responsible adult should remain present at all times whilst the repair is being carried out.

12. Forced Entry to Complete Repairs

We may require access to residents' properties in an emergency and will make all reasonable efforts to contact the resident or their representative to arrange access. We will provide not less than 24 hours' written notice to the resident before attempting entry unless there is a serious and immediate risk to safety. We will only enter a residence without permission or lawful authority in extenuating circumstances and with the agreement of an Assistant Director or Director. We will in all cases of access ensure that the property is secured and the resident able to gain access without delay and will make arrangements to repair any damage caused by entering the home.

13. Missed Appointments and No Access

When booking an appointment for either a pre inspection, responsive repair, or post inspection, the council will confirm the date and time of the appointment with the tenant at the time of booking and will follow this up with an email or text (unless it's an emergency call out).

If the tenant is out on our first visit, we will leave a card to let them know we have called and this will be recorded on our system with photographic evidence. It will be the tenant's responsibility to contact us and re-book the repair, unless it is a health and safety issue.

We will also try up to two times to re-arrange access for a requested repair within the following 5 days before the repair is cancelled. If not repairing poses a serious safety risk or is potentially dangerous for other residents of the building or could cause further damage to our property, we will take appropriate steps to gain access to the property.

If the tenant fails keep three consecutive appointments or refuses access to employees or contractors, the Council will charge the tenant £40, which will be invoiced directly to the tenant, unless the tenant can justify why they did not attend (emergency, doctors etc.) and proof will be required. It will then be the tenant's responsibility to reschedule another appointment.

Failure to pay the charge will result in recovery action.

The council will also compensate the tenant £40 if we fail to keep three consecutive appointments with the tenant and have not notified them in advance. This will only include missed appointments for a scheduled inspection or repair and will not apply to emergency appointments. It will also only cover where we have needed to access the property to carry out the work and not communal repairs. It will not cover missed appointments for circumstances which are outside of the council's control, such as adverse weather, extreme traffic, staff sickness etc.

Tenants will only be eligible to claim compensation for missed appointments if they are up to date with their rent or service charge, where applicable.

14. Out of Hours Service

The council operates an Out of Hours service, to deal with emergencies that occur outside of normal working hours. This service can be accessed using the normal council telephone number.

The council considers an emergency to be where there is an immediate danger to a person or serious risk of damage to the property, and therefore the tenant must ensure this applies before using this service. During the initial call, the tenant will be asked a series of questions to establish whether or not it is considered an emergency. If it is not deemed to be an emergency, the tenant will be advised to call back during normal working hours. If the council attend, and it is not considered to be an emergency, the council will recharge the tenant the cost of the call out, which is £40. No work will be completed during the out of hours call out unless it is a genuine emergency, and the council will only 'make safe' and arrange follow up works the next working day if needed.

15. Pre-inspections

Some jobs will require a pre-inspection before the repair appointment can be arranged, to establish the extent of the works. These will be where the scope of the job is not known or if the diagnosis given by the tenant is not detailed enough. Such inspections will be carried out by a Responsive Repairs Surveyor, technical supervisor or a nominated contractor representative.

Pre-inspection of repair problems are carried out in the following circumstances:

- The repairs cannot be properly diagnosed without an inspection
- The defect is one that is commonly diagnosed incorrectly
- The repair will require a detailed specification
- The item has been recently repaired
- The property has been the subject of an usually high number of repair requests
- The repairs may be rechargeable to the customer as a result of damage or neglect
- The repair is likely to cost over £500

The council will aim to pre-inspect repairs within 10 working days of the report being received from the tenant or leaseholder. Appointments will be arranged at the time of the repair being reported, where possible.

Such inspections will be carried out by a surveyor or a nominated contractor representative. Repairs will then be issued in the appropriate timescales or if not classified as a responsive repair, referred to the Asset Management Team for consideration to be included onto a planned works programme.

16. Like for Like Repairs and Making Good

If an item is beyond repair and needs to be replaced, this will be on a like for like basis unless there is a more financially viable option. There are occasions where we may not replace on a like for like basis due to a particular item no longer being available or being a more practical solution. This will be discussed with the tenant before the work is carried out.

If the council has to replace a part to the tenant's kitchen or bathroom, we will try and make sure it matches with what the tenant already has. However if this is not possible, the council will endeavour to provide the nearest possible match. The council will not replace all of a tenant's kitchen units or bathroom suite because an exact match cannot be found.

'Making good' means that after completing a repair the council will also prepare the surface immediately around the repair so that it is ready to be decorated, for example after there has been a leak, or where a component has been replaced.

The council will not be able to 'make good' if the tenant has covered access panels, hatches, ducts or ducting with wallpaper, tiles, carpet, wood, laminate or other finish.

Where damage to decor has occurred and this is not the fault of the council or its contractor the tenant will be responsible to claim from their home contents insurance.

17. Tenant's Improvement Works

Secure tenants have certain rights to make improvements in the property, with written consent from the council. This may include for example a new kitchen or bathroom, but excludes external decoration and alterations and additions to the installations, fixtures and fittings in the property. The Council will not unreasonably withhold consent but will make it conditional upon the work being carried out to an appropriate standard.

In deciding whether to give consent for improvements matters including the safety of the property for occupiers will form part of the considerations, along with any expenditure the Council may have to incur, and the impact on the value of the property. Failure to seek the councils consent or to comply with any conditions will be a breach of the tenant's obligations under their tenancy.

In addition the tenant will be required to reimburse the council for any expenditure it may incur in carrying out repairs to the property as a result of the tenant failing to obtain the councils consent or failing to carry out the works in accordance with the council's conditions or other statutory requirements.

Tenants will also be responsible for maintaining any fixtures / fittings they have installed themselves. The council will not maintain items left by previous tenants and may remove them as an alternative to repairs unless we have agreed responsibility to do so.

It is not advisable for residents to lay fixed floor coverings (tiles, hard wood or laminate) in their homes. This is due to the difficulty in removing them to carry out essential works such as under floor pipe work, without damaging the fixed covering. The council does not advocate the installation of fixed floor coverings. Where residents have installed fixed wall or floor coverings they are responsible for obtaining the correct noise insulation, contents insurance cover and for removing them for works which we deem essential. If the tenant is unable to remove the covering themselves, the council will undertake this on their behalf but will recharge the tenant. This will also apply to any other tenant installed fixture or fitting, such as fitted wardrobes that prevent the council from undertaking necessary work.

The council retains the right to recover costs of removing fixed floor or wall coverings from tenants who have installed them, on their departure from the tenancy when the property becomes void.

18. Inherited Improvements

An 'inherited improvement' is improvement work that has been carried out by a previous occupant, which the new tenant may have the option of accepting when they move in.

If a new tenancy starts, through a succession, assignment or mutual exchange agreements, and the new tenant accepts the improvements in writing they will be responsible for all repairs and maintenance or replacement of the improvement.

19. Quality Assurance / Post Inspections

Gravesham Borough Council aims to conduct post inspections on 10% of all responsive repair work costing under £500, for both in-house operatives and contractors. The 10% will be selected at random.

In addition to this, further inspections will be carried out where a concern regarding the work has been raised by the tenant or housing officer.

For all responsive repairs over £1,000, 100% will be post inspected.

It is important that tenants allow us access to their property to post inspect the repair after completion.

For void properties, planned programmes or cyclical works 100% will be post inspected to ensure that they have been carried out to a high quality and to monitor value for money.

20. Mutual Exchanges

Residents with an assured tenancy have the right to carry out a mutual exchange providing they have met all the criteria in the Councils Mutual Exchanges Policy.

Prior to agreeing a mutual exchange, a property inspection is undertaken by the Housing Officer and a Surveyor to determine any repairs that will need to take place before the exchange, in addition to the gas and electric check.

Both parties will be notified in writing, by their housing officer prior to the exchange of their responsibilities with regards to repairs and will receive notification of any planned works scheduled for either property.

21. Minimising Loss

The tenant has a responsibility to minimise or avoid loss that may be suffered as a result of disrepair. For example, if experiencing water penetration or dampness the tenant would be expected to move items of furniture and /or possessions away from the affected areas so they do not get damaged.

The tenant also has responsibility to inform the council of any repair issue that may need attention so as not to incur more damage within the property. For example, by not reporting a leak, it damages the fabric of the building.

22. Tenant Liabilities for Damage to Adjoining Properties

If the tenant, a member of their family, a visitor or a pet causes damage to an adjacent property the tenant is responsible for the cost of repairing the damage. This includes instances where the damage caused is accidental. This is part of the Tenancy Conditions.

The tenant can either use their own insurance or make other arrangements to pay the costs directly to their neighbour.

23. Void (Empty) Property Repairs

The council recognises the importance of re-letting empty properties as quickly as possible and inspect all our properties before a tenancy is surrendered, when notice is given or a transfer is proposed. This

allows the council to identify works that are needed and the responsibility of those works and associated costs.

All of the properties will undergo a gas and electric safety check prior to re-occupancy.

The Council will apply a minimum void standard to all properties which can be found at Appendix 2. The aim of the standard is to ensure that the council presents a properties to our tenants in a condition which encourages them to maintain the properties to the same good standard as they have received it in, as well as meeting our obligations as a Landlord.

It also ensures that homes are re-let to a consistent, cost-effective standard that can be communicated and easily understood by the incoming tenant.

24. Contractors

Gravesham Borough Council is committed to completing as much in house work as possible, but will engage contractors for some responsive repair work, and for planned maintenance, improvement works and cyclical programmes.

Contractors will be procured in accordance with our standard procurement procedure. Where possible; resident input will be sought on all major contracts.

All competition for Gravesham Borough Council work will be in accordance with our financial regulation, Standing Orders and the council's constitution.

Where work has not been completed to a satisfactory standard by a contractor they will be expected to return to rectify the fault as soon as is reasonably practical.

All successful contractors will have demonstrated adequate third party insurance and compliance with all statutory regulations.

25. Planned Works Programmes and Maintenance

Gravesham Borough Council aim to maintain all our properties in good condition through programmes of planned works which are drawn together mainly from information obtained during Stock Condition Surveys, but also from resident consultation, from referrals from the repairs team and 'made safe' responsive repairs. The stock condition survey data will be used to programme planned maintenance and improvement programmes.

The council undertake programs of improvements to our properties to ensure that they meet the expectations of our residents and will look to renew certain aspects and component parts of our properties that have or are reaching the end of their useful life. Please see table below for expected life cycles:

Component	Minimum Expected Lifecycle
Flat Roof	20 Years
Pitched Roofs	80 Years
Kitchens	20 Years
Bathrooms	30 Years
Boilers	15 Years
Doors & Windows	35 Years
Electrical Testing	5 Years
Electrical Upgrades	10 Years
Electrical Rewires	30 Years
Cyclical Redecoration (Properties - Non Leaseholders)	10 Years
Cyclical Redecoration (Flats - Non Leaseholders)	7 Years

Estimates are based on a minimum lifecycle and no replacements will be considered until the component reaches its minimum expected life cycle. Near to the end of the expected life cycle, the council will contact the tenant to arrange an inspection of the component at which point the surveyor will decide whether a replacement is needed at that point in time. If a component does not need replacing, the surveyor will estimate a revised life expectancy and the council's systems will be updated. No replacements will be made if there is sufficient life left in the component or if the life expectancy can be extended by way of a minor repair.

The council will notify the tenant well in advance of any planned work programmes taking place and will ensure the tenant is kept up to date with all relevant information, including timescales. Should the tenant refuse for the work to be undertaken, or if they make accessing the property difficult for the council or its contractors in order to complete the work, they will be removed from the planned works programme. The council will not carry out any minor repair work on a component if the tenant has previously refused for the component to be replaced during a planned works programme unless it relates to health and safety, or is causing damage to the property or adjoining properties. In cases where the council has to take action in the interest of health and safety or building integrity, the tenant will be recharged the cost of this work.

All works carried out as part of a planned work programme are covered by a defects liability period. This will start from the date of completion and usually the defects liability period is:

- 12 months for building repairs
- 12 months for electrical or mechanical works

These works will be carried out by the original contractor and will not be reported to the day to day repairs team.

26. Aids and Adaptations

The purpose of aids and adaptations is to modify existing disabling environments in order to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for our tenants and their families. It is not just a matter of adapting housing stock, but providing an individualised solution to the problems of people who experience a disabling environment.

The type of work that can be done includes minor aids, which are low cost adaptations which may be referred straight to the repairs team and include:

- Grab rails and handrails
- Lever taps

Larger adaptation work could be:

- Stair lifts
- Replacement of bath with a shower
- Ramps
- Parking provision
- Alterations to heating and lighting
- Hoists
- Adapted kitchens

To make sure that the adaptations Gravesham Borough Council carries out are the most suitable for tenants, we only carry them out on the recommendation of the Occupational Therapy service.

On receipt of an Occupational Therapist report a visit will be carried out by the Aids & Adaptations Surveyor to discuss the recommendations in further detail.

All works will be specified and then quotations requested on major work. One approved arrangement will be made by one of the council's partner contractors to visit the property to carry out the necessary adaptations.

27. Cyclical and Compliancy Works

The council is responsible for managing the maintenance, repair and servicing of the components detailed as follows: -

- Passenger Lifts
- Stair, Lifts
- Water Hygiene and Legionella testing,
- Disabled Adaptation equipment (e.g. hoists)
- Fire detection, and extinguisher servicing,
- Sprinkler Systems
- Emergency Lighting
- Dry Risers
- Lightning Conductors
- Water Pumps
- Sewage Pumps
- Access Control Systems (Door entry & Automated Gates)
- Warden Call
- Communal Aerials
- Ventilation (Fans & ASHP)
- Petrol Interceptors
- Gas safety servicing (see below)

28. Gas Safety Checks

Every year, by law, the council must ensure all gas appliances and flues fitted by the council are maintained in a safe condition by carrying out an annual safety check. These checks are recorded and the tenant will be given a copy of that record.

The annual check by our contractor will involve:

- A full check on all landlord pipe work and gas appliances
- A visual inspection of the tenant's own gas appliances e.g. cooker

If any appliance is found to be immediately unsafe it will be disconnected from the supply and a warning notice will be served.

The council will order work to repair landlord pipe work and appliances. The tenant will be responsible for repairing or replacing their own appliances at their own cost. Any repairs must be carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

Every tenant must give access to our contractor to carry out the annual gas safety checks and the gas servicing team will follow the Non Access Procedure should access not be obtained.

Any associated costs incurred with obtaining court authorisation to enter the property will be recharged to the tenant such as warrant and gaining entry.

29. Leaseholder Obligations

The council is responsible for keeping common parts of leasehold properties in a good state of repair such as:

The Structure:

- Roofs, drains, gutters and pipes on the outside of the home
- Outside main entrance doors (but not the front doors of individual flats.
- Window frames and sills (not including glass)

Communal areas:

- Path and steps (back and front)

- Stairs and landings

Installations, fixtures and fittings:

- Shared water pipes, water tanks and gas pipes and electrical wiring.
- Light fittings in shared areas and block security lighting
- Controlled door entry systems
- Lifts.

Leaseholders are responsible for:

- All repairs and decorations to the inside of the property, including front door, glass in windows and all fixtures and fittings.
- Any damage to the common parts and services caused by the leaseholder, members of the household, visitors or pets.

The leaseholder will be responsible for repairing any damage due to neglect or carelessness caused by them, a member of their family, tenant, visitor or pet.

The council will invoke the Recharge Policy if there is evidence that damage is the fault of a leaseholder or their household or visitors but refuses to take action.

30. Garage / Parking Space Repairs

Tenants must not materially alter the structure of a garage, or alter the posts or chains of a parking space. However tenants are permitted to add reasonable security measures to a garage. The Council will keep the roof, door, main walls and timbers in reasonable repair.

In all instances of termination garages should be left in the same good condition in which they were let. This means that no graffiti or unreasonable damage should be left unrepaired. The garage or parking space should also be clean and clear of any rubbish or belongings. Should this not be the case then this will be rectified by the council and the costs recharged to the tenant.

In instances where garages fall into disrepair to the degree that it is not economical for the council to repair the garage the licence will be terminated. The council may also offer the tenant the option of transferring to a nearby garage where suitable vacancies are available.

Any garage repairs will be allocated a response priority of 28 days, however on occasion may be longer if parts are required and cannot be sourced within the timescale. The council will respond sooner if the repair is a risk to the health and safety of members of the public to make safe. The contents of the garage are the responsibility of the tenant and it is important they make alternative arrangements whilst the repair is waiting to be carried out if the contents is at risk of being damaged. In these circumstances where the repair means the tenant is unable to use their garage, rent may not be charged and will be at the discretion of housing management.

Tenants must take out their own insurance for garage contents.

31. Damp and Mould

The main cause of mould in homes is due to condensation caused by insufficient heating, lack of ventilation and lifestyle issues; this comes at a great financial cost to the council as a landlord.

Condensation occurs when moist air produced by ordinary household activities such as cooking and bathing hits a cold surface e.g. a cold wall or window, which causes damp and mould growth. This can usually be resolved by making some simple changes within the home.

Key steps for preventing condensation;

- Ensure the home is heated effectively
- Reduce the amount of moisture produced in the home e.g. by covering boiling pots, drying washing outside or in a well-ventilated room, keeping the kitchen and bathroom doors closed when in use and opening windows for ventilation.

- Wipe down any condensation that forms on windows or sills preventing damage to décor and mould growth
- Use extractor fans or cooker hoods where provided and report any defective equipment to the Council.

Where the council identifies that condensation is the cause of reported damp and mould, information and advice will be provided to the tenant and remedial work will not be carried out until improvements are made by the tenant.

The council does not have to undertake work to remedy damp and mould if it is caused by issues within the home that could have been avoided, this is the tenant's responsibility. However may consider supporting the tenant by doing so if they are confident the tenant understands what is required going forward.

32. Assisted Re-Decorations Scheme

Gravesham Borough Council's assisted decorations scheme is aimed at tenants who for reasons of age or disability find it difficult to keep their home in good decorative order.

The qualifying criteria for this scheme are:

- Any tenant named on a sole or joint tenancy over the age of 65 years old.
- A tenant named on a sole tenancy or joint tenancy with a disability, where the housing officer feels it would be beneficial for the work to be carried out.
- In addition the council should not have carried out any internal decorations to the property in the previous 6 years.
- The have lived within the property from a minimum of 6 years.

Tenants are responsible to apply for the scheme, and if successful will be placed on a waiting list for the council to redecorate up to two rooms of the tenant's choice. The council will endeavour to carry out the agreed redecoration within 12 months of the tenant submitting a successful application, but this is not guaranteed. Timescales may be changed at the discretion of the council depending on demand and business need.

33. Fencing

Demand for fencing will always exceed resources available and there is a need for a consistent and transparent approach to manage what the council deliver to tenants. Gravesham Borough Council has no statutory responsibility to provide fencing to tenants and fencing repairs and replacement is the responsibility of the tenant.

The Council will only undertake fencing replacement in the following circumstances:

- If the fence backs on to an alleyway or footpath. This will be a close board fence for safety, security and privacy reasons.
- Where the council has a responsibility to maintain land, i.e communal areas.
- Where the property is empty, the council may undertake a repair / replacement before it is re-let.
- Where the council does provide fencing between properties this will be a chain link fence or whichever offers best value for money at the time.

Repairs to gates including hinges and latches are the responsibility of the tenant.

In order to support tenants that are elderly and / or have a disability the council will carry out fencing repairs if they meet the following criteria:

- Where a named tenant on the tenancy is aged 65 years or above.
- Where a named tenant on the tenancy is registered disabled. Evidence will need to be provided to the Housing Officer before any work will be undertaken

If the fence is beyond repair and requires complete replacement, this will be the responsibility of the tenant to replace.

Tenants with an active Right to Buy application will not be entitled to receive any assistance, even if they meet the criteria outlined above

Properties where hedges / shrubs provide the defensible space to properties are the responsibility of the tenant to maintain and keep in order. Walls that provide defensible space to properties remain the responsibility of the council to maintain.

A tenant can request that the council undertakes the work on their behalf and the full cost will be recharged to the tenant, which needs to be paid in advance of the works being undertaken.

34. Insurance

The tenant is responsible for any damage, caused by the neglect or carelessness of the tenant, a member of their family, visitors or pets and therefore should ensure that their home and its contents are insured.

The tenant is responsible for any loss or damage to their home due to theft, flooding or accidental damage. The tenant may also be responsible for damage caused to another property, for example, caused by flooding from their property.

The council routinely advises tenants to take out home insurance to cover:

- Furniture and fittings
- Personal belongings
- Clothes
- Food and drink
- Jewellery and other valuables
- Rented equipment

The council actively promotes the council's home contents insurance scheme or a tenant can make their own insurance arrangements which should, as a minimum, match the standard provided under the council's scheme.

Tenants who rent garages must also ensure there is adequate insurance cover for the contents of the garage.

35. Zero Tolerance

Gravesham Borough Council has a zero tolerance attitude towards the abuse of any staff or contractors by residents and their visitors. Where such behaviour occurs the Council may limit access to the repairs service, except in the case of some emergency works.

All tenants and their visitors are expected to treat all staff with respect and dignity. This means that they must refrain from behaving in a way that is aggressive, threatening, abusive, or insulting. Nor must they engage in any behaviour, intentional or otherwise, that constitutes harassment or discrimination.

Gravesham Borough Council will take reasonable measures to protect staff from such behaviour where appropriate, including suitability for tenancy.

The Council also expects its own workforce and contractors working on our behalf, to comply with the council's code of conduct at all times.

36. Equality and Diversity and Vulnerable Tenants

The council will aim to deliver services that do not unfairly discriminate on any basis.

The council will offer an enhanced service to those qualifying tenants who may be less able to maintain their property, based on age and disability.

The council will ensure understanding of important information by employing translators or by arranging translation of documents where needed.

Our contractors are expected to demonstrate the highest levels of customer care and will provide translators when required and carry out minor domestic tasks for the elderly or disabled where it is necessary to complete a repair e.g. moving furniture or re-hanging curtains.

This policy has been fully assessed and confirms that the council's approach to repairs and maintenance will not adversely affect any individual or group.

37. Domestic Abuse

In a domestic violence situation the council may provide the victim with extra assistance. The council may change front door locks or do repair work that relates to incidents of domestic violence if it has been reported to the Police and a crime number can be provided.

38. Performance and Monitoring

Feedback from customers on the quality of the service received is important to the council to help in the continuous improvement of the service. Regular and random customer satisfaction surveys will be carried out following the completion of a repair and this data will be used to shape the service improvements in the future

If our residents at any time feel they have been aggrieved or treated unfairly throughout any process they can appeal in accordance with our complaints procedure. A copy of Gravesham Borough Councils Complaints policy and procedure is available upon request or via the website

To ensure that the council maintains a high service standards, we will monitor the effects of this policy using a range of key performance indicators. Performance data will be shared on a regular basis with Housing Management, tenants and will be available on our website.

APPENDIX 1

Repair Responsibility Chart

Repair		Responsibility	
		Council	Tenant
Boundaries	Fences, walls and gates dividing or otherwise which do not form boundaries to Public Highways and/or Public Footpaths		✓
Boundaries	Fences, walls and gates that form boundaries to Public Highways and/or Public Footpaths	✓	
Boundaries	Establish and mark boundaries for our properties		✓
Condensation	Advice and assistance available from us upon request)		✓
Doors	Internal door(s), frames, handles, latches, locks and draft proofing		✓
Doors	Internal door operation and adjustment (where existing)	✓	
Doors	Fire doors	✓	
Doors	External door, frame or lock repairs following a break in (if a crime number isn't provided)		✓
Doors	External door operation and adjustment, frames, locks and ironmongery provided by us	✓	
Doors & Windows	Cleaning, lubrication and basic upkeep and maintenance		✓
Electrical	Fuse box, wiring, sockets and light fittings	✓	
Electrical	Equipment or circuits not owned or installed by us		✓
Electrical	Light bulbs, plugs and fuses		✓
External	Roof, chimney stack, guttering, rainwater goods, fascias, soffits	✓	
External	Pathways and hard standings to dwellings, outbuildings and garages provided by us	✓	
Finishes	Seals and tiling around bath, basin, worktops, etc, where provide by us	✓	
Finishes	Internal decoration		✓
Floors	Loose floor coverings, fitted carpets, laminate flooring, etc		✓
Floors	Floorboards, sub floor or tiling provide by us (except for damage due to neglect or misuse)	✓	
Gardens	Maintenance, removal and disposal of vegetation		✓
Glazing	Defective or broken glazing (except for damage due to accident or misuse)	✓	
Heating	Chimney sweeping open fires and Tenants own appliances		✓
Heating	Heating systems, radiators, thermostats, timers, etc installed by us	✓	
Heating	Chimney sweeping for a Gravesham Borough Council provided solid fuel heating system	✓	
Infestation	Vermin, rats, birds, squirrels	✓	
Infestation	Insects, ants, wasps, fleas, bed bugs		✓
Insulation	Loft, cavity wall, pipes and cylinder jackets	✓	
Kitchen	Cookers/ovens gas or electric installation including any required modifications to kitchen		✓
Kitchen	Kitchen units and worktops (except for damage due to neglect or misuse)	✓	
Plumbing	Taps, gate and wheel valves	✓	
Plumbing	Toilet seat re-fix or renew, plugs and chains to baths and sinks		✓
Plumbing	Water service pipes, tanks and overflows	✓	

Plumbing	External taps		✓
Plumbing	Blocked waste pipes or traps within the property (except for flats or when caused by a defective system)		✓
Plumbing	Toilet pan and cistern, baths and showers provided by us	✓	
Plumbing	Soil vent pipes, drains and chambers	✓	
Rubbish	Rubbish and debris clearance and disposal from property, land or garage		✓
Safety	Staircase, banisters and handrails (except for damage due to neglect or misuse)	✓	
Safety	Gaining entry where locked out including repairs as the result of gaining access		✓
Safety	Keys for window locks provide by us	✓	
Safety	Asbestos testing, assessment and removal where posing a risk	✓	
Safety	Door Entry Systems provided by us	✓	
Safety	Window safety restrictors above ground floor to childs bedroom	✓	
Safety	Keys for doors		✓
Safety	Additional door locks, chains and viewers		✓
Safety	Smoke alarm battery replacement		✓
Safety	Window safety restrictors to ground floor or rooms ther than Childs bedroom		✓
TV Equipment	TV aerials, satellite dishes and telecommunications equipment		✓
TV Equipment	Communal TV aerial systems provide by us to flats and maisonettes	✓	
Utilities	Electricity and Gas supplies from the meter	✓	
Utilities	Electricity and Gas meters and supplies to the meters		✓

Appendix 2- Void Let-table Standard

Item/ Element	Standard to be achieved
Cleanliness	<p>All properties will be free from infestation, clean and fit for occupation on completion of void works.</p> <p>All surfaces will be disinfected with particular attention afforded to kitchens and bathrooms.</p> <p>Baths, basins and toilets will be disinfected and free of lime scale and left ready for use.</p>
Clearance	<p>The property will be left free of rubbish both internally and externally, including any garages, sheds or outhouses.</p>
Services	<p>It is the incoming tenant's responsibility to arrange connection for gas and electric with their preferred supplier.</p> <p>The meters will be free from debt at the start of the tenancy.</p>
Damp and mould	<p>All properties should be free from damp and mould and the incoming tenant is expected to work with the council to keep the property in this condition.</p>
Heating	<p>No empty property shall be re-let without an approved and functional system of domestic hot water heating.</p> <p>In certain areas mains gas is not available, in these circumstances electric heating shall be provided, water heating will be provided by electric immersion heating.</p> <p>Gas would have been capped when the void became empty and it is the incoming tenant's responsibility to arrange a turn on and test which will be done by the council.</p> <p>Gas central heating is serviced annually. If a new gas installation was completed when the property is empty, a copy of the LGSR(certificate) will be left in the property as well as advice on the annual gas check procedure and anniversary date given.</p>
Decorations/ Walls and Ceilings	<p>The council does not currently carry out decoration as a matter of course unless the decoration maybe in very poor state or offensive.</p> <p>Where decorative finishes are a health and safety hazard, these finishes will be removed.</p> <p>Where a tenant moves into a sheltered unit they will be added to the waiting list of the Assisted Decorating Scheme.</p>

	<p>Wall coverings will not be disturbed to determine plaster condition and any defects identified after tenancy commencement date shall be treated as a responsive repair.</p> <p>In addition, indentations to the walls and minor cracking of plaster finishing will be classed as a decorative defect and will be the responsibility of the incoming tenant.</p>
Window/ Glazing	<p>All windows should be in good condition, be able to open, close, lock and be wind and weather tight, however this is not always easy to identify during the void process and is likely to be picked up once the tenant has moved in.</p> <p>Windows are not normally replaced as part of void works but if beyond repair should be left in a secure condition whilst replacements are ordered.</p>
Doors	<p>There will be a complete replacement lock change to all external door and three keys will be provided to the incoming tenant.</p> <p>Doors will be free from major damage and open and close freely and have adequate and appropriate locking systems. All door furniture should be in place. There are occasions when this is difficult to determine whilst the property is empty due to the door being sited, if this is the case it will be picked up as a responsive repair.</p> <p>Where there is a common entrance, 3 keys/ fob will be provided, any additional key / fob is at the cost of the incoming tenant.</p> <p>Door entry systems will be working and operational.</p> <p>All internal doors will be free from holes and in full working order, any new internal doors that have been fitted will leave adequate space for carpet.</p>
Flooring	<p>All floor coverings should be in good condition. Missing and/or broken floorboards and chipboard flooring should be replaced to match existing (where possible).</p> <p>Where present, all vinyl floor tiles will be in a good and secure condition.</p> <p>Airbricks to suspended ground floor voids will be checked to ensure adequate air circulation and if necessary surrounding ground levels should be lowered.</p>

	<p>Carpet grippers should be left in-place if in good condition (removed from doorway and stairs) and other works specified to floors are not compromised e.g. laying hardboard.</p> <p>Floors will be even and checked for trip hazards.</p>
Bathroom	<p>All bathrooms will be in a reasonable state of repair.</p> <p>Bath will be free from chips and/or cracks and be in a clean condition. This may be done on occupation.</p> <p>Taps will be secure and working properly and be supplied with a plug and chain.</p> <p>Bath Panel will be securely fitted and in a good condition.</p> <p>Tiling to the bath area will be adequately sealed. The tiling will be secure, clean and free from cracks.</p> <p>WC will be securely fitted to the floor and be free from cracks and or chips. The toilet will be working correctly clean and be free from blockages. New toilet seat will be provided.</p> <p>Showers left in situ will be electrically tested, checked that they are working correctly and that there is adequate tiling for the shower.</p> <p>Shower curtain will be provided where a screen is absent.</p> <p>Where grab rails are in situ these should be securely fastened.</p>
Kitchen	<p>All kitchens should be in a reasonable state of repair.</p> <p>Kitchens should have adequate number of units to meet the size of the property, with a minimum of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 single drainer stainless steel sink • 1 double wall unit (or two single wall units) • 2 base units + Space for washing machine, fridge and cooker (wherever possible, provision for a fridge/freezer is to be made). <p>Units will be in good working order.</p> <p>Cupboard doors and units should be secure, have secure shelving, bases and drawers.</p> <p>Work surfaces will be free from chips, burns, deep scratches and be finished with edging strips.</p>

	<p>Cooker points will be checked as part of the electrical and gas check.</p> <p>Electric fans should be checked if working correctly.</p> <p>Cracked, damaged or missing tiling will be replaced with standard white fitting.</p> <p>Sealant between tiles and work surface will be renewed if damaged.</p> <p>Sink and associated plumbing will be checked for leaks.</p>
Exterior	<p>The roof should be in good condition and weather tight. Any broken, missing or slipped tiles should be replaced to match existing, as should flashings and fillets.</p> <p>All gutters/down-pipes should be free from obstruction, have adequate fall and be free from leaks. Replacement guttering/down-pipes will be in UPVC plastic unless this would not be in keeping with the building or within regulations relating to conservation areas.</p> <p>Gully covers should be provided to all gully outlets. Manhole covers should be in good condition and secure.</p>
Insulation/ Energy Efficiency	<p>All properties will have an applicable EPC.</p> <p>All properties will have an efficient, well maintained and thoroughly tested heating supply.</p> <p>All roof spaces will be inspected prior to any new tenant moving into a property.</p> <p>All roof spaces will be insulated up to the current standard.</p> <p>Tanks and pipes in roof spaces should be lagged.</p>
Fire protection	<p>All council properties will comply with all current fire regulations.</p> <p>Fire doors will be fitted where appropriate to comply with regulations and have door closers installed</p> <p>All current properties are fitted with hard wired/battery backup smoke alarms. These will be tested during the void inspection. In any properties added to our stock, as a minimum, one battery operated smoke alarm will be installed as a temporary measure until</p>

	<p>such times as a hard wired alarm is installed.</p> <p>All electric circuits will be earthed in accordance with current requirements.</p>								
Electrical	<p>All electrical services to the property will be checked for faults and general integrity and will comply with current legislative standards and appropriate electrical certificate generated.</p> <p>All sockets, lighting and their fittings will be in good condition.</p> <p>In addition to a general check on the standard of electrical circuits, the following minimum number of electrical double socket outlets will be available in each room as follows: -</p> <table data-bbox="798 728 1117 873"> <tr> <td>Kitchen</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bathroom</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Living Room</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bedrooms</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </table> <p>(Power outlets will be provided for fridge/washing machine spaces)</p>	Kitchen	2	Bathroom	0	Living Room	2	Bedrooms	2
Kitchen	2								
Bathroom	0								
Living Room	2								
Bedrooms	2								
Gardens/ outside	<p>All garden areas will be free from rubbish.</p> <p>Ponds will be filled in and made safe.</p> <p>Uneven pathways, steps or loose paving will be re-levelled and securely fastened.</p> <p>Make safe steps that could cause a trip hazard.</p> <p>Unsafe structures including greenhouses, sheds and garages will be demolished. Structures will be checked against the Asbestos survey for safe removal.</p> <p>Any structures that will remain will be a gift to the incoming tenant and gifting letter to be completed and signed by them.</p> <p>We will carry out a grass cut where required to the front or rear gardens of properties, however this may need doing again by the tenant when moving in depending on re-let time and weather. If further rubbish is found during this process then a further clearance will be arranged on occupation.</p> <p>Vegetation clearance work may be appropriate where a garden is in a particularly poor condition. Provision to cut back overgrown gardens will be assessed at the time of the void inspection. In some instances the garden may only be cleared of vegetation once the property has been</p>								

	occupied.
Fencing/ gates and boundaries	<p>Fences and walls forming a boundary to between the property and a public highway will be intact and in good condition.</p> <p>Where the ownership of the boundary is with the empty property, remedial work will be carried out to rectify any damaged part. Where the boundary fence is beyond its useful life it will be replaced with chain link fencing.</p> <p>If the works are urgent the repairs to the fence will be carried out prior to letting. All non-urgent fencing repairs will be carried out upon occupation.</p>
Telephone/ TV/ Satellite dishes	<p>Provision of a TV aerial is the tenant responsibility where there is no provision of a communal aerial.</p> <p>Satellite dishes and TV aerials that are unsafe will be removed; otherwise these will be left in situ.</p> <p>The council has no responsibility as a landlord to ensure that there is a telephone line installed within the property. This is the tenant's responsibility and any work needed to install the line must be agreed by the council and costs met by the tenant.</p>
Aids and Adaptations	<p>Properties that have been previously adapted will not be altered as part of the void process, although redundant items such as stair lifts may be removed if there is no demand.</p> <p>Converted shower areas will not be re-instated to a traditional bathroom arrangement. However, where an adaptation is beyond its useful life, a traditional arrangement will be reinstated.</p>