

You and your home

All about repairs and maintenance



- How to get a repair done
- Taking care of your home
- The maintenance work we plan ahead
- What to do in an emergency

You and your home

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Also part of the Residents' Handbook:

- You and your household
- You and your neighbourhood
- You and Southern Housing Group
- You and your rent



In this section:

- How you can contact us about a repair.
- Which repairs are our responsibility.
- How we prioritise repairs.
- What to do if you aren't satisfied.
- How we expect our contractors to behave in your home.
- How we expect you to treat our contractors.

How do I get a repair done?

When you need a repair that is our responsibility, call:

- the Service Centre on **0300 303 1771** for all non-gas repairs (8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday)
- Robert Heath Heating on **0800 032 0688** or **020 8336 6767** for gas repairs (8.30am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday)
- for genuine emergencies when our lines are closed, call Homeserve on **08457 573 764**.

When you call the Service Centre, they will:

- take the details and give you a job number to track your repair
- tell you the name of the contractor who will do the work
- tell you how long the repair should take
- arrange an appointment for a contractor to call, or
- get the contractor to call to make an appointment.

Repairs



When you call Robert Heath Heating about gas servicing or repairs, they will ask who your landlord is, then put you through to the right team, who will:

- take the details
- arrange an appointment, or
- get the gas engineer to call you to make an appointment.

The repairs we do

We are responsible for repairs to:

- the structure of your home and exterior walls
- chimneys and roofs
- windows (but not usually the glass in them) and doors
- drains (but not waste pipes)
- guttering, paths and steps
- gas, electrical, water and waste disposal services, including basins, sinks, baths, toilets, flushing cisterns, overflows
- kitchen worktops, cabinets, cupboards and fitted wardrobes supplied by us
- the areas you share with your neighbours.

We will also deal with infestations of rats and cockroaches.

If a repair needs doing because someone in your household has caused damage or been neglectful, you must either do the repair yourself, or we will have the repair completed by our contractor and charge you for doing it.

Gas, water and electricity

If you can smell gas, report it immediately to National Grid on **0800 111 999**.

If you are having problems with the meter or mains supply for gas, electricity or water, phone your supplier at the number on your last bill.



Repairs

This also applies if you have caused an infestation. If we find that you have caused a blockage to drains or toilets for example with disposable nappies, rubbish, clothing or anything else, then we may charge you for the cost of the unblocking or repair.

How long will it take?

We want to complete your repairs as quickly as possible. Our aim is to do so on the first visit, to the best possible standard, and at a time that is convenient for you. Some repairs are more urgent than others. We treat emergency repairs as a priority. We constantly monitor our contractors' performance and quality to make sure you are getting a good service.

Emergency repairs

Your repair is an emergency if there is a serious risk to safety, security or health. In an emergency, we send a contractor as soon as possible and always within 24 hours. They will try to do a repair on the spot. But if that isn't possible, they will 'make safe' and come back as soon as they can to complete the job.

Emergencies include:

- dangerous structures
- blocked main drains
- burst pipes or other major plumbing repairs
- toilet out of use, where you don't have another one
- no hot water to your block
- no heating (between 1 October and 1 May), if you are elderly or disabled

Repairs



- no lighting to a communal staircase
- total electrical failure to your block
- the block is not secure, including broken door-entry systems
- broken glass that we are responsible for, and that is dangerous or a security risk.

Non-emergency repairs

We aim to complete all other repairs as quickly as possible. But, more importantly, we want to complete them at a time that suits you. We also want our contractors to finish the work the first time they call, whenever possible.

While our contractors are in your home, we may encourage them to work on any similar repairs that need doing, if it's convenient for you. We don't want to make you arrange another appointment if we can avoid it.

Make sure you're in!

When you make an appointment with a contractor, please make sure you're in when they call. Wasted journeys add to the cost of providing a repairs service and make it harder for us to complete repairs on time. If you really can't be in for an appointment, call the Service Centre as soon as possible to change it.

Complex and expensive repairs

If a repair is going to be tricky or expensive, we may need to send one of our surveyors to check it before ordering the work. It allows us to be sure about exactly what is needed and means we can brief our contractors better before they arrive at your home.



We may also need to get cost estimates, to be sure that we are getting the best possible value for money for a larger job. It doesn't mean that we put these jobs to the back of the queue, but they do take a little longer.

Occasionally, when a property is due to be refurbished, we will just carry out a temporary repair, because the work is going to be re-done in the near future.

What if I'm not satisfied?

If you aren't satisfied with any aspect of our repairs service, please let us know. Your feedback helps us to improve in future.

We aim to contact at least 10% of residents who have had a repair done, often by phone, to check your overall satisfaction with the service you received.

If you need us to take action to resolve a service failure, you should call the Service Centre to make a complaint. For more details, see the [You and Southern Housing Group](#) booklet.

Compensation

We will consider paying compensation if:

- we haven't completed a repair to our usual standard
- we haven't kept an appointment.

For more details about compensation, see the [You and Southern Housing Group](#) booklet.

Repairs



Contractors' code of conduct

We run the repairs service in partnership with four main contractors who each service the properties in one area. We picked them for their high standards and competitive prices.

When working in your home, our contractors have agreed to:

- carry an ID card
- take care with your possessions
- be polite
- treat you with respect
- protect all surfaces near the work
- clean up afterwards
- leave your home secure and weather-tight, with the gas, electricity and plumbing all working at the end of each day
- keep your home secure when you aren't there.

To help our contractors work safely and effectively in your home, we provide them with all the information they need about our buildings and our residents.

If you experience any problems with one of our contractors, please call the Service Centre.

You and our contractors

We require our contractors to act respectfully towards you. It is only fair that you give them the same respect. We ask you to:

- be polite and co-operative
- clear away your furniture and belongings
- make sure the work area is safe and clean.



Repairs

If you are racist, sexist or offensive towards one of our contractors, we will treat it in the same way as we would if you did the same to one of our staff or another resident. Any serious offences could put your tenancy at risk.

Our service standards

When you order a repair, we will:

- make sure we offer you an appointment
- try to make sure any repairs are completed in one visit (sometimes we may need to visit your home more than once)
- make sure your repair is completed within a reasonable time limit, and
- make sure all our contractors keep to our access and customer-care service standards.

To keep standards high, we will:

- visit you and carry out quality inspections (10% of all repairs every month)
- carry out random telephone satisfaction surveys (10% of all repairs every month)
- make sure all complaints about the quality of our repairs service are followed up by an inspection (if you ask for one), and
- offer you the chance to get involved in choosing and monitoring contractors.

Work planned ahead



In this section:

We plan special work programmes to:

- service your gas installations every year
- decorate the outside of your home every five years or so
- make major repairs or improvements to groups of homes at the same time
- make special improvements to the homes of some of our disabled residents.

We are also replacing communal TV aerials, so they can receive digital signals.

As well as responding to your repair requests, we carry out regular, planned maintenance work to keep your home safe and in good condition. We also have a rolling programme of major repairs, to bring our older homes up to modern standards.

Gas checks and servicing

The law says that we must check and service your gas installations once a year, to make sure they are safe.

When it is time for your home to be checked, Robert Heath Heating Ltd will give you an appointment. Please call them to change it, if you know you won't be home.

For your family's safety, it is very important that you give us access for gas servicing and checks. If you repeatedly break appointments, we may have to take legal action to force entry.



Work planned ahead

If you smell gas:

- don't smoke or strike matches
- don't turn electrical switches on or off
- put out naked flames
- open all doors and windows
- shut off your gas supply at the meter
- call National Grid immediately on freephone **0800 111 999**.

Our service standards

To keep your gas appliances safe, we will:

- make sure you have an appointment for a yearly gas safety check.

Decorating

We are responsible for decorating the outside of your home and any areas you share with your neighbours. We do this regularly. Internal decorations are usually your responsibility.

Our service standards

To keep schemes well maintained, we will:

- redecorate outside and inside shared areas every five years (currently seven years for some internal blocks), and
- give you a minimum of four weeks' notice before we start redecorating.

Work planned ahead



Planned maintenance and major repairs

Parts of your home, like the roof, windows and gas boiler, need replacing when they reach the end of their useful life. To keep our homes in good condition and to benefit from cost savings, we will usually carry out these replacements on a number of homes at once. We call this planned maintenance.

We also plan programmes that involve completely refurbishing a number of our older properties. We will give you information about any planned work before it starts and we will consult you whenever there are choices to be made which affect the inside of your home.

We try to limit disruption by instructing contractors to carry out noisy jobs in the daytime. We make sure they meet safety regulations and keep the site tidy.

While the work is going on, we ask you to keep your children away from any danger. There may be special arrangements for rubbish disposal and parking.

If you have to move out

Sometimes we have to ask residents to move out, so that we can refurbish, demolish or sell the property they are living in. This is called 'decanting'.

Decanting can be temporary, for example if we are carrying out major repairs and need you to move temporarily while the work is carried out. It can also be permanent, such as when we are demolishing a property as part of a major regeneration scheme.

We will give you plenty of information and consult you if you need to move from your home. In addition, depending on the circumstances, you may qualify for a financial payment.



Work planned ahead

To compensate you for the actual costs of moving, you will receive a disturbance allowance when you move out and another if you have to move again from a temporary to a permanent home.

You will receive a home loss payment if you are having to move out permanently and were not given any choice about it. To qualify, you must have lived at this address for at least a year as your only or main home. The amount payable is reviewed every September. However, if you are behind with your rent, we may use your home loss payment to clear what you owe.

Our service standards

When we plan major repairs, we will:

- write to you explaining our plans and how long the work will take, as early as we can (at least eight weeks before we begin work)
- tell you our plans, find out your views and find out if you have any specific needs or requirements, at least four weeks before we begin work. This may be by an open meeting, a face-to-face interview, a phone conversation or in writing
- introduce you to our contractor at a meeting or by letter, at least two weeks before we begin work
- at least two weeks before we begin work in your home, offer you choices (where possible), talk to you about your needs and agree how long the work will take, and
- on our larger projects offer you the chance to choose a resident representative who will be involved in appointing contractors and who will join the project management team.

Work planned ahead



Our service standards

When we begin major repairs, we will:

- give you at least two weeks' notice if we need access to your home
- offer you a convenient appointment time
- give you a 'residents' information pack' no later than two weeks before we start work
- give you the contact details of someone you can speak to if you have any questions
- make sure our contractors treat you and your home with respect, and
- make sure we keep you up to date with the work we are doing.

When we have finished the work, we will:

- offer you the chance to inspect and check that the work has been completed to a good standard
- make sure our contractors give you the instructions for new equipment or fittings, or show you how to use them, and
- give you a customer satisfaction survey so that we can get your comments and use this information to improve future programmes.



Work planned ahead

Adapting your home for disability

If you (or someone else in your household) are disabled or need special facilities to help you manage at home, please let us know by calling the Service Centre.

We will usually pay for minor changes to your home. Wherever possible, we will approve simple changes immediately (for example, fitting lever arm taps) and order the work without delay. For other minor adaptations, like grab rails, we will try to get one of our maintenance team to visit you and agree the work as quickly as possible.

If you need changes to your home that are more complicated or expensive, you will need to be assessed by an occupational therapist, who can be contacted via your local social services department. You will also need funding from your local council or another source. We can help you to apply for the assessment and funding.

If your home cannot easily be adapted, we can also help you to find a new home which meets your needs better.

Work planned ahead



Digital TV

To make sure we are on track for the final changeover to digital TV in 2010, we are undertaking a programme of planned aerial replacements. You will probably be included in this programme if you share a TV aerial system with other properties – generally because you live in a block of flats. When your block comes up in the programme, you will be contacted by our specialist contractor, who will need access to your home.

We don't allow residents in blocks to have individual satellite dishes.

The costs of installing and maintaining a communal aerial are included in your service charge, but we don't pay any digital TV subscription fees. You can choose to:

- use the aerial to watch the terrestrial channels only (BBC1, BBC2, ITV1, Channels 4 and 5), without paying a subscription, or
- pay a subscription, so that you can view additional channels.

If you don't already share a TV aerial, we won't change your system, because your aerial is your responsibility. To change over to digital, you will have to ask our permission to get a satellite dish installed and subscribe to your own provider, or consider alternative systems that use your existing aerial, such as Freeview.

Don't forget, you still need a TV licence to watch digital TV. However, in sheltered schemes, you may be able to benefit from the discounted TV licence scheme.

For more information call the Service Centre.



Taking care of your home

In this section:

You are responsible for:

- keeping your home in good decorative order
- keeping your garden clean and tidy
- carrying out minor repairs that are your responsibility
- looking after your own furniture and fittings, including taking out contents insurance
- getting our approval in writing before making any changes to the property other than decorating it.

You should never touch your gas or electricity systems. Only qualified people may do this.

What do you expect of me?

We expect you to keep your home in good decorative order and to keep your garden (if you have one), and the area outside your home, clean and tidy.

We also expect you to carry out the minor repairs that are your responsibility.

Your repair responsibilities

You are responsible for:

- unblocking sinks, baths and hand-basins
- trimming and/or re-hanging doors when you've put in new carpets

Taking care of your home



- dealing with pests like ants, wasps, bees, fleas and mice (unless they are in shared areas). Call the environmental health department at your local authority for advice
- repairs to telephone points or individual TV aerials, cables and junction boxes (unless they are part of our communal installation)
- minor fixtures such as coat hooks, curtains, curtain rails, shower heads and hoses
- repairs to your own cooker, fridge and other items
- replacing light bulbs, fuses, battery-powered door bells and smoke detectors (unless they are in shared areas)
- resetting or adjusting lighting and heating controls, thermostats and programmers
- fixing damage to internal doors, window glass or built-in furniture
- window and door locks if your keys are lost or stolen, you are locked out, or have been broken into (unless you get a crime number from the police)
- any handles or other items on your front door that we didn't supply
- indoor and outdoor washing lines (except in communal drying areas)
- broken glass, except for shared entrance doors and windows, or damage as a result of deliberate vandalism
- replacing broken toilet seats or lids
- garden sheds and similar structures
- anything else that belongs to you.



Taking care of your home

If your home is new or refurbished

For the first year after a home is built or refurbished, the contractor who did the work has to put right any problems that arise. This is known as the defects liability period.

During these 12 months, it is important that you don't do any repairs or redecorating without checking with us first.

Decorating

Internal decorations are usually your responsibility. However, if redecoration is necessary after a repair, we will arrange this – though we will usually only redecorate the damaged area.

If you live in one of our sheltered schemes, check your tenancy agreement, or with the manager of your scheme, to see who is responsible for internal decorations.

If you are retired or disabled and on a low income, and you live in our normal rented housing, you may be able to get a grant from us to pay for internal decoration. You are usually allowed a grant to decorate just one room a year, but you won't qualify if your home was built or modernised in the last five years.

Depending on your circumstances and the grant available, we might pay for materials and labour, or just materials. We base our labour rates on the amount we pay our contractors. The materials costs are based on the decorating allowances we give new tenants where needed. If we are paying for labour then you can use our contractors for the work, but you can also use your own if you prefer. For more details, call the Service Centre.

Taking care of your home



Can I make improvements?

If you are a secure or assured tenant, you can make improvements to your own home, but you must get our permission first. We will only refuse permission if we have a good reason.

We will need full details of the work you want to do and we may send a surveyor to inspect before giving our answer. We might set some conditions about the standard or type of work you do. You must also get any other official permission needed, for example planning permission or building regulations approval.

Our service standards

When you apply to improve your home, we will:

- give you a decision within 28 days.

When you move out, you can choose to:

- leave the improvement behind, or
- take it with you, putting things back the way they were.

If you leave your improvement, and you did get our permission before carrying it out, you may be able to claim compensation. The improvement would need to qualify under the legal right to compensation for improvements.



Taking care of your home

How much compensation you get would depend on:

- how much the improvement cost
- how much 'life' it had left, against the expected life of this type of improvement.

Improvements and their expected life

- 20 years:
 - loft or cavity wall insulation
 - double glazing, other external window replacement or secondary glazing
- 15 years:
 - rewiring, or power, lighting or other electrical fittings (including smoke detectors)
- 12 years:
 - bath, shower, hand-basin or toilet
 - space or water heating
- 10 years:
 - kitchen sink
 - storage cupboards in bathroom or kitchen
 - work surfaces for food preparation
 - insulation of pipes, water tank or cylinder
 - security improvements, but not burglar alarms
- 8 years:
 - draughtproofing to external doors or windows
- 7 years:
 - thermostatic radiator valves.

Taking care of your home



Gas and electricity

The law requires that any work carried out on gas appliances has to be carried out by a qualified gas engineer on the Gas Safe Register.

To work on fixed electrical installations, you must be an experienced electrician registered with the NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting) or a similar organisation.

If you employ someone to work on either your gas appliances or your electrical installations, please make sure they are qualified and issue the appropriate certificates where required.

Aerials and other receiving equipment

If you live in a house, you must get our permission before putting up any type of external radio or television aerial, satellite dish or other receiving equipment.

If you live in a flat, you are not allowed to put up any equipment of this kind. We provide shared aerials for most of our blocks (see 'Digital TV' on page 16).



Taking care of your home

Are my belongings insured?

As your landlord, we are responsible for insuring the property. We do not insure your furniture, any fixtures you have had fitted, your decorations or personal possessions. It is your responsibility to take out contents insurance.

We strongly advise you to take out contents insurance.

We have arranged a household contents scheme for our residents at favourable rates. To find out more, call the Service Centre. However, you may prefer to find your own insurer.

If something of yours gets damaged and you think it is our fault, you can make a claim against our insurance. Contact the Service Centre for a compensation claim form and we will make sure your claim is assessed as quickly as possible.

The decision to pay out will depend on whether we are legally responsible. So, if the damage was caused by an incident which we couldn't reasonably have prevented, then neither we nor our insurers will accept liability.

We are not responsible if something of yours is damaged by other residents. If they have contents insurance, ask them to refer your claim to their insurers. If they don't, get independent legal advice if you want take the matter further. Alternatively, if you have contents insurance, you can claim on your own policy and leave your insurers to follow up a claim against the person responsible.

Emergencies



In this section:

- A reminder about emergency repairs.
- What to do if the fire alarms go off.
- What to do if your home is at risk of flooding.
- Where to get help if you can't stay in your home.

Repair emergencies

If you have a repair emergency, you should phone the Service Centre immediately on **0300 303 1771** (8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday). For genuine emergencies when our lines are closed, call Homeserve on **08457 573 764**.

Gas emergencies

If you can smell gas, report it immediately to National Grid on **0800 111 999**.

Fire alarms

Don't ignore an alarm – your life could depend upon it. Many blocks of flats or shared houses have a main fire alarm in the hallway. If this alarm starts to ring:

- investigate – you may need to leave the building immediately
- if it is safe to do so, ring 999 and ask for the fire service – remember to give your address
- don't turn off the alarm – one of our contractors will attend to reset the system
- if your block often has false alarm calls, we will send a contractor to carry out an inspection and prevent this from happening in future.



Smoke alarms

You need at least one smoke alarm in your home. Battery-operated alarms are cheap to buy and easy to fit. Make sure that you replace the batteries regularly.

Some smoke alarms are mains-powered with a battery back-up. Switch them off at the fuse box when you change the battery. If we fitted the mains-powered smoke alarm, we will repair it if it is faulty, but you must still replace the battery when necessary.

All alarms have a test button. Make sure you use this regularly to check it is still working.

Flooding

Flooding can occur due to burst pipes or from natural causes such as a river overflowing.

If the flooding is caused by a pipe:

- turn off the water at the mains stop cock
- switch off the power at the fuse box, but make sure the area around the box, including where you are standing, is not wet. If it is, stay clear of the area
- contact the Service Centre immediately. If it is out of hours use the emergency number.

If you live in an area that sometimes floods, it is very important that you take out contents insurance. See page 23 for more details.

Emergencies



If your home is at risk of flooding from natural causes, like a river overflowing:

- contact the National Rivers Authority to find out what the risk of flooding is in your area
- be prepared to evacuate your home. Flood water is dangerous.

Contact the Service Centre immediately. If it is out of hours use the emergency number.

Where can I stay if I can't return to my home?

Sometimes you can't return to your home because it is damaged and needs repair, or it might be unsafe.

We don't have temporary accommodation available for emergency use. We will refer you and your household to the local authority homeless persons department for emergency housing. This usually means temporary housing or bed & breakfast accommodation at best, often in areas away from your current home.

We will provide you with advice and support, but we may not be able to offer any alternative to the council's offer. If you have contents insurance, your policy may cover you for private rented accommodation for a limited period. Check with your insurers. Our insurance does not provide cover for this.



Emergencies

Our insurance will cover any damage to the building and our fittings, and we will proceed with repairs as quickly as possible. However, any damage to your possessions or fittings will not usually be covered unless you have your own contents insurance.

Phone us on **0300 303 1771**, 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday

Write to **Service Centre, Southern Housing Group, PO Box 643, Horsham RH12 1XJ**

Email **service.centre@shgroup.org.uk** or **service.income@shgroup.org.uk** or **service.repairs@shgroup.org.uk** (but phone if the matter is urgent)

Visit our website at **www.shgroup.org.uk**

This leaflet contains important information about our repairs process. To request a copy in another language, in Braille or in audio format, or for more information, call 0300 303 1771.

Arabic

تتضمن هذه النشرة معلومات مهمة حول عملية الإصلاح لدينا. لطلب نسخة باللغة العربية أو بطريقة بريل أو بصيغة صوتية، أو للحصول على مزيد من المعلومات، اتصل برقم .0300 303 1771

Bengali

আমাদের মেরামত প্রক্রিয়া সম্পর্কে এই প্রচারপত্রে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তথ্য রয়েছে। বাংলা, ব্রেইল-এ বা অডিও ফরম্যাট-এর একটি কপি পাওয়ার অনুরোধ করার জন্য অথবা আরো তথ্যের প্রয়োজন হলে আমাদের সার্ভিস সেন্টার-এ 0300 303 1682-এ ফোন করুন।

French

Ce dépliant contient des informations importantes sur notre processus de réparation. Pour demander un exemplaire en français, en Braille ou au format audio, ou pour en savoir plus, appelez le 0300 303 1771.

Somali

Macluumaad-sidahan waxaa ku yaal war muhiim ah ee ku saabsan nidaamka sidaan wax u hagaajinno. Si aad u dalbatid nuqul Soomaali ah, farta-indhoolaha (Braille) ama nooc dhagaysi ah, ama war intaas ka badan, wac 0300 303 1771.

Spanish

Este folleto contiene información importante sobre nuestro proceso de reparaciones. Para solicitar una copia en español, en Braille o en formato de audio, o para más información, llame al 0300 303 1771.

Turkish

Bu kitapçık tamir sürecimiz hakkında önemli bilgiler içermektedir. Bu bilgileri Türkçe, Braille (kör alfabesi) veya sesli formatta talep etmek ya da daha fazla bilgi almak için 0300 303 1683 no.lu telefonu arayınız.