

responsibilities for repairs • gardens • emergencies and repairs • reporting repairs •
• scheduling repairs • gas appliances • smoke and heat alarms • asbestos •
damage to your home • fire safety • security • energy efficiency • burst pipes •
condensation and dampness • feedback from tenants

Tenants' Handbook



Who has responsibility?

The responsibilities for looking after your home are shared jointly between you and us.

We are responsible for maintaining:

- **the structure and outside of your home;**
- **the shared (or communal) areas; and**
- **fixtures and fittings that we have provided.**

We are responsible for most repairs, maintenance and servicing needed to the property as a result of fair wear and tear. You are responsible for a number of minor repairs and decorating the inside of your home.

We want to maintain your home as best we can, and rely on you to help us by reporting repairs quickly and allowing us into your home to carry out the necessary work.

Which repairs are we responsible for as landlords?

Our responsibilities, as set out in the Tenancy Agreement, are:

- **External repairs and maintenance.**
- **Lift maintenance.**
- **Communal lighting.**
- **Drains and gutters.**
- **Communal parts repairs.**
- **Exterior painting.**
- **Windows (excluding glazing and cleaning).**

- **Communal and hard surface pathways.**
- **Fitted fires and radiators installed by us.**
- **Estate lighting and amenity areas (except public services or parish lights on a public thoroughfare).**
- **Communal TV aerials & satellite systems.**
- **Gas and water pipes.**
- **Electrical wiring and sockets/switches.**
- **Hot water systems and central heating where fitted.**
- **Basins, sinks, baths, showers and toilets installed by us.**

On these items, you are responsible for reporting to us problems or repairs needed. We ask you to report promptly so that we can reduce:

- **the inconvenience to you**
- **the cost of the work, which could get worse if the fault is just left.**

You are also responsible for reporting repairs to communal areas – do not assume someone else will report the problem!

Which repairs are you responsible for as a tenant?

Under the Tenancy Agreement you are responsible for the minor repairs and for keeping the inside of your home painted and decorated.

What this means is that you are responsible for:

- **Replacing damaged door handles, knockers, letterboxes and gate catches.**

- Replacing plugs and chains in baths and sinks as necessary.
- Replacing broken toilet seats and lids.
- Replacing broken windows and glass.
- Replacing damaged floor and wall tiles.
- Supplying fire baskets (if appropriate) where no back boiler is fitted.
- Regularly testing fire alarms (where fitted).
- Keeping drains, grilles and waste pipes clear and regularly flushed.
- Replacing fuses, light bulbs, fluorescent tubes and starters and re-setting trip-switches.
- Repairing electrical circuits damaged by faulty appliances.
- Regularly cleaning chimneys and flues.

These are known as your repairing responsibilities.

What else might you have to pay for?

You will also have to pay for:

- Any repairs that are needed because the property has been damaged, misused or neglected by you, your family or visitors.
- Making good any damage caused to the estate by you, your family or visitors.
- Clearing any blockage to drains or waste pipes caused through misuse or your failure to keep cleansed.

- The cost of replacing fuses, resetting trip-switches and repairing electrical circuits if you fail to do so or if you have a faulty appliance.
- The cost of call outs and repairs done out of hours by contractors when the problem is not a 'same day' emergency repair, or our responsibility.

Who is responsible for looking after your garden?

It is your responsibility to keep your garden neat and well cared for. You should:

- Cut grassed areas regularly
- Trim all shrubs and hedges regularly, making sure they do not grow taller than 6 feet (1.8 metres). Nor should they overhang public roads, footpaths or your neighbours' property.
- Keep the property free from weeds, rubbish, discarded items, animal fouling and noxious substances.

You will need our written permission before you:

- Remove or destroy any trees, hedges, walls, earth banks or fencing, **or plant or erect new ones.**
- Modify the property for in-garden parking or vehicle access.
- Erect sheds or other outbuildings.

Emergency services

If an emergency occurs involving fire, leaking gas, electric shocks, or the smell of burning from electric installations you should immediately contact:

- **The Fire Brigade (999 or 724491); or**
- **Guernsey Gas (724811); or**
- **Guernsey Electricity (0800 5870285).**

Advice on what to do in such emergencies appears on our Contact list, which we suggest you keep with your phone books.

'Same day' emergency repairs

A 'same day' emergency repair is a fault that is an immediate danger to your safety, security or health. For example:

- **Major storm or structural damage;**
- **No usable toilet in the property;**
- **Total loss of electrical power (when not fuses or trip-switches);**
- **Burst water pipes;**
- **A window or door is so badly damaged that your home is no longer secure.**

If you need a 'same day' emergency repair, you should phone **724215**.

During office hours you will speak to our Property Management Section. Outside of office hours, the Duty Officer of a firm acting on our behalf deals with calls.

Whoever takes your call will assess if the problem needs a 'same day' emergency repair. It may be that the repair can be safely left until the next working day.

If we call out a contractor to deal with a 'same day' emergency repair, you or a responsible member of your household must remain at home to give access.

If you cannot, you must tell us any times you will be absent. Failure to do this:

- **will result in you being charged for the wasted call-out; or**
- **if we have to force entry to carry out an emergency repair, you will be charged the cost of repairing any damage.**

A contractor called out at night or over the weekend may not be able to carry out a full repair. Then the contractor will make your home safe until the full repair can be completed, normally on the next working day.

Remember you will have to pay for a call-out (and work) that is not a 'same day' emergency – and this could be very expensive.

Non-emergency repairs – how do you report one?

You can report a repair by phoning our Property Management Section on **713465** during office hours.

What information do you need to give when reporting a repair?

It is important that you give us as much information as you can when reporting a repair to help us order work as quickly and accurately as possible.

When reporting a repair, we will ask you:

- **your name and address;**
- **the details of the repair;**
- **where the repair is needed;**
- **information on access to the property;**
- **a daytime phone number;**
- **any special circumstances, for example if you are elderly or disabled; and**
- **any other important information (for example, a crime reference number if you are reporting a repair resulting from vandalism to your home).**

For internal repairs, we will arrange for a contractor to contact you to make an appointment.

Repair inspections

In some circumstances, for example if the work is difficult to identify, we will carry out an inspection so that we can accurately assess the repair work. We will make an appointment for one of our Housing Inspectors to call and assess the work.

Appointments for repairs are normally made for work to be carried out between **8.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday**. Our Housing Inspectors usually make their calls between **10.30am and 3.30pm on weekdays**.

If you are unable to keep an appointment, you must give our Property Management Section ample notice. Failure to do this will result in your being charged for our contractor's time.

We also want our contractors to keep all appointments. They must tell you if they cannot keep an appointment or they are delayed.

Do you get an acknowledgement when you report a repair?

When you report a repair, we will give you, or send you a Job Confirmation Sheet. This will contain information about:

- **the job order number;**
- **the work or inspection to be done;**
- **when the work was ordered;**
- **the target period within which the work or inspection should be done; and**
- **the contractor's details.**

If you want to ask about the progress of a repair order, you should contact our Property Management Section or the contractor and quote the Job Confirmation Sheet number.

Do staff carry identification?

All our staff carry identification, which you should ask to see. All contractors will either have identification or a form issued by us authorising them to carry work on our behalf.

If you are in doubt about the identity of anyone seeking access to your home, you can phone our Property Management Section to check who they are. **If in doubt, do not let anyone in.**

What else do you need to know?

For your safety and convenience, you need to find where these items are:

- **Water**

The valve to turn the water off or on. There may be more than one. Stop valves are usually found in a kitchen cupboard, in the bathroom or beside the hot water cylinder.

- **Electricity**

The trip-switch, fuse box(es) and meter. For safety reasons the trip-switch will cut out your electricity supply if you have a faulty appliance – and a fuse may blow. Get to know how to re-set your trip switch and to replace a fuse.

- **Gas (if supplied)**

The stop valve to cut off the supply. This is usually beside the meter where the gas supply enters the property.

Being able to do these things could save you inconvenience and money, as well as prevent or limit damage to your belongings and home.

It is good to check that stopvalves are working from time to time. If you find a stopvalve has seized, please contact our Property Management Section.

How long will you have to wait a repair to be carried out?

We will do all we can to carry out repairs as quickly as possible. We give repairs a priority depending on the type of work that is needed. The time taken depends on the sort of repair you need.

We have various categories of repair ranging from 'same day' emergency repairs to non-urgent repairs that may be included in programmed work being carried out at a future date.

On assessing a repair, our Property Management Section will give each job a priority rating. **This is a guide** on how long the job should take to complete. The priority gives our contractor the number of working days as a target for completing the work.

Despite our best efforts it may not be possible to meet the target. This can depend upon a variety of factors, for example the number of other priority repairs occurring at the same time, the ease of access or contractors' workloads.

The target for completion is on the Job Confirmation Sheet we will send you.

Access for repairs

Unless a 'same day' emergency, we will normally give at least twenty-four hours notice for you to arrange giving us access.

It may be necessary for you to give us access when a problem occurs with an adjoining property.

If you fail to give us access at reasonable hours of the daytime, you will be breaking your Tenancy Agreement and we may take legal action against you. If an emergency develops, we would have to force entry to carry out the repair.

What happens if we have to move you out of your home?

Sometimes we have to carry out major repair or modernisation work to your home, which cannot be done while you are living there. Depending on the type of improvements, you may have to move permanently or temporarily. But in both cases, we will help you find a new home.

We would expect to make you an offer of reasonable accommodation, if possible within the same area. You would be expected to accept any reasonable offer.

Except in an emergency, we will give at least 1 month's notice of a transfer to temporary accommodation.

We will let you know as soon as you can re-occupy your original home and we would expect you to do so as soon as possible.

What do you need to know about gas servicing and maintenance?

• Gas safety inspections

In the interests of your health and safety, we are legally obliged to carry out a safety check of our gas appliances once a year.

Our contractor will make an appointment to visit your home to carry out this safety check.

• Servicing our gas appliances

We must also make sure that our gas appliances are fully serviced regularly.

Depending on the type of appliance you have, this may be either every year or every three years. Our contractor will contact you to make an appointment to carry out the service. There is no extra cost to you for this service, unless you deny access for the work.

You **must** allow our contractor into your home so that they can carry out this important work. If you fail to do so, we will take legal action to gain entry to carry out the work, and we may charge you for these legal or access costs.

• Your gas appliances

Please note – the gas safety check and service only cover appliances we have installed in your home. We cannot check or service your cooker or other appliances that belong to you. You must arrange annual service checks by an appropriately qualified person.

You are responsible for regularly cleaning the flue.

Faults with the gas pipe work or flue are our responsibility and these should be reported to our Property Management Section.

Alarms, smoke, heat and carbon monoxide detectors

We have an ongoing programme of fitting detectors in homes that are rewired or renovated.

Most detectors have to be renewed or serviced within five or ten years, and we will arrange to do this.

If we have yet to install detectors in your home, we would encourage you to install one or more yourself. Battery operated smoke alarms are cheap, easy to fit and widely available.

You do not need our permission to install smoke detectors or alarms unless electric wiring is necessary.

Asbestos

Some of our properties may contain asbestos products. These were used in the 1970's in various forms, for example sheet building materials and Artex, often used on ceilings.

Much of the asbestos is low risk and does not present any threat to safety if left sealed and undisturbed.

You need our written permission to carry out alterations to your home. We will point out any high-risk areas, which may contain asbestos during an inspection of the work proposed. If this happens, you and your contractor are first urged to read the leaflet "Working with asbestos in buildings". This is available free from the Health and Safety Executive.

Decorating the inside of your home does not require our approval. This should not present a hazard as we have identified few examples of asbestos in the Artex of homes.

But as a precaution we advise you not to strip or sand Artex coatings. Only wash these coatings before redecorating.

What happens about damage to your home?

• Damage resulting from repairs and maintenance work

Sometimes, the type of work that our contractor is doing will damage the decoration. This is unavoidable and, wherever possible, we will tell you beforehand that damage is likely to happen. When there is 'inevitable damage', we will **not** compensate you for damage to the decoration.

Examples of the type of work that will result in inevitable damage include damp-proofing work or repairs to plasterwork.

• Damage by you or your contractor

If you employ a contractor to work at your home, and they damage the property, we will hold you responsible for the repair and you may be charged to put things right.

If you cause a lot of damage to the property, we will take legal action to repossess your home and to recover the costs of repairs.

• Other parties

If someone who is nothing to do with you has caused the damage, please report the incident to the Police, and our Property Management Section.

What fire-safety precautions should you take?

Smoke detectors are very good for warning you about fire. Over the coming years we hope to fit an alarm in all our properties.

In the meantime, we would encourage you to install one or more battery-operated alarms yourself.

To reduce the risk of fire:

- never keep petrol, white spirit, paraffin or other flammable liquids in your home;
- do not use paraffin or bottled gas heaters;
- never leave chip pans unattended on the cooker – never pour water onto a burning chip pan – smother flames with a damp cloth, fire blanket or a lid. Oven cooked chips are a safer alternative!;
- put out cigarettes and matches and take care with ashtrays;
- make sure children cannot reach matches;
- put an approved fireguard around fires and do not bank too high with burning materials;
- do not hang clothes around fires, cookers or storage heaters;
- use candles with caution – never leave them unattended or go to sleep whilst they are lit; and
- make sure you and all members of your family know how to get out in a hurry.

If you do find a fire:

- get everyone out of the building and dial 999;
- shut doors behind you as you leave to contain the fire and smoke;
- **never use a lift if there is a fire - always use the stairs;** and
- never go back into the home unless a fire officer says it is safe to do so.

How can you make your home more secure?

You will have been given one set of keys when you moved in. If you need extra keys, you will need to get them cut. You may wish to consider extra features such as security alarms, or external lighting. You need to get our permission first.

For your day-to-day security, we suggest that you:

- always ask for proof of identity if someone calls at your home (if you are still not completely sure, tell them to wait outside, close the door and contact their company, our Property Management Section or sheltered scheme warden for confirmation);
- always lock your windows and doors when you go out;
- mark items such as home entertainment equipment, prominently and permanently, with your postcode;
- do not leave keys under doormats or notes on your door telling people you are out;
- cancel your milk and newspapers if you are going away;
- make your home appear occupied when you are out, using curtains and lighting, fitted with automatic timers if appropriate;
- never allow someone into the building as you are entering or leaving if you have a door-entry system, unless you know them; and
- let your sheltered scheme warden (if you have one) know if you are going away even if it is only for one night.

How can you improve the energy efficiency of your home?

Everyone wants to heat their homes effectively and save money on their heating bills. The following tips may help you to do this.

- You can reduce your yearly heating bill by around 8% by turning the thermostat setting down 1°C.
- The ideal temperature setting for water in your hot-water tank is 60°C.
- The ideal room temperature is between 18°C and 21°C.
- Turning up the thermostat will not heat the room up faster.
- Where you can, set radiators in different rooms at different levels, for example, living rooms warmer than bedrooms.
- Low-energy light bulbs cost more to buy but last longer and are cheaper to run.
- Draught excluders can make a difference with older windows and doors.
- Carpets with underlay and curtains with linings help keep in the warmth.

How can you avoid frozen or burst pipes?

Frozen pipes can cause a lot of damage if they burst. To avoid the problem, it helps if:

- pipes which could freeze are insulated;
- you know where the stopvalve is;
- you keep your home warm; and

- you keep the heating on low when you are away from home in the winter.

If your pipes freeze:

- turn off the stopvalve and the heating system;
- thaw out the pipes gently using a hairdryer or a cloth soaked in hot water (do not use a naked flame); and
- check for leaks as the pipes thaw;

If your pipes burst:

- turn off your heating system and immersion heater;
- turn off the stopvalve and turn on all the taps to drain down the water quickly; and
- call our Property Management Section on **724215**

What can you do about condensation?

There is always moisture in the air of any home caused by normal household activities such as cooking and bathing. Condensation is caused when warm moist air reaches a cold surface like windows or walls.

Condensation can promote mould growth that can damage decorations, furniture and clothing, but you can reduce it by doing the following:

- Keep your home warm so there are no cold surfaces for water vapour to settle on.
- In cold weather try to leave some heating on. Most homes take quite a long time to warm up and it may cost more if you try to heat your home quickly in the evening.

- When cooking, keep lids on pans as much as possible, keep the kitchen door closed and open a window.
- When bathing or drying clothes, open windows to allow steam to escape.
- Whenever possible, do not dry clothes on radiators or elsewhere indoors. If you have a tumble dryer you must make sure you vent the dryer directly to the outside to avoid a rapid build-up of damp air.
- Always use your extractor fan if you have one.
- Do not block up airbricks or vents.
- Do not use paraffin or bottled gas heaters as they produce a lot of moisture and are dangerous.

What about dampness?

Dampness may happen on the inside of external surfaces and can be identified by brown staining.

Damp is caused by water seeping into your home because the protection provided by the roof, walls, windows or floors has failed.

If you think your home is suffering from damp, contact our Property Management Section.

How can you make a complaint about repairs?

We aim to provide a high-quality service to you at all times. However, we and our contractors sometimes get things wrong.

When this happens you should first contact our Property Management Section so that we can try to sort out the problem quickly.

However, if you are still not satisfied with the way we have dealt with your repair, or any other aspects of the service you received, you can make a complaint.

How to do this is explained in the section '**What to do if you have a complaint**' in the booklet '**What you can expect from us**'

How can you help improve the service?

We are committed to improving our service to you and welcome your comments, ideas and suggestions for improvements.

• Comments

You can:

- fill in one of the customer comment cards available at our offices; or
- pass your comments directly to our Property Management Section. See our Contact List for details.

• Job satisfaction slips

When a repair or maintenance job is carried out you will receive a '**Job Confirmation Sheet**'. At the bottom of this you will find a '**Job Satisfaction Slip**'. This gives you the chance to comment on the service you have received.

Please make every effort to fill in and return this slip to our Property Management Section. This will help us to improve our service to you.

