



# Repairs and improvements to your home

**Tenants Handbook**  
HOUSING DIRECTORATE



There are many jobs that must be done to keep a home in good condition. Some repairs are needed at short notice, or without warning. Others can be expected and planned months in advance. A table at the end of this leaflet lists many of the repairs you may need undertaken in your home. It tells you which are your responsibility, and which are the Council's responsibility.

## **Programmed maintenance**

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Every five years an external inspection is made of your home. The guttering, chimneys, walls, gates, paths, aprons, windows, doors, and external decoration will be inspected. Fencing will also be checked, but most fences, except site boundaries, are the responsibility of the tenant. Maintenance works, such as external decoration, can then be done together with other homes in your road or block. Work carried out in this way saves money, and often prevents serious problems arising later.

About 500 properties undergo additional planned maintenance or improvements each year. Typically this work includes replacement kitchens and bathrooms, rewiring, replacement windows, installing central heating, re-roofing, major refurbishment and installing door entry systems. If you have any enquiries about planned maintenance you should phone our Housing Assets Section on **01992 564203**.



## Day to day repairs

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Sooner or later a burst pipe, broken light bulb holder, or other fault will occur and you will need to contact Housing Repairs. You can call Housing Repairs direct on **01992 564199** (during office hours). In an emergency outside office hours, call **01992 564000** (see below). Repairs can also be reported online **[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing)** or by email to: **[housingrepairs@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:housingrepairs@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)**

Each repair job receives a priority classification:

**Category A:** Priority emergency repairs which are normally carried out within 24 hours.

**Category B:** Other emergency repairs which are normally carried out within 3 days.

**Category C:** Urgent repairs which are normally carried out within 7 working days.

**Category D:** Repairs which are normally carried out within six weeks.

**Category E:** Carried out as part of the planned maintenance programme.

Most repairs are carried out well within these target times. An inspector may need to visit your home to assess what needs to be done.

Appointments are available for certain repairs. You can request an appointment when reporting the defect.

## Emergency repairs and gas leaks

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Outside office hours, the main Council telephone number: **01992 564000** becomes an emergency number. It will deal with all genuine emergency repairs except gas leaks for which you should phone the **National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999** (all areas).

The out of hours emergency service will respond where there is a risk to you and your family, or where there is some danger to the property. Please do not ring the emergency telephone numbers outside of office hours unless you have a real emergency. We may recharge you if you report a defect out of hours that is not an emergency repair.

## Rechargeable work

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In some cases we will charge you for the cost of repair work we have carried out, plus an administration charge and VAT. We will do this for the following repairs:

- Repairs reported out of hours that are not emergencies
- All false calls and unnecessary visits
- Faults resulting from damage caused by the tenant
- Repairs to the tenant's own fixtures or fittings
- Lost keys and damage caused by forcing entry
- Any other repair that is not the Council's responsibility

## Home Contents Insurance

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We advise you to take out adequate home contents insurance to cover for loss or damage of decoration, goods, or belongings that you own and keep at your premise, including outbuildings. Your insurance scheme may cover you for the costs incurred through lost keys, and other rechargeable works.

## Adaptations for tenants with disabilities

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If you have a disability, and an adaptation to your home could make life easier, contact the Social Care department of Essex County Council. See our Tenants Handbook leaflet number 1 'Information on housing services' for contact details. If they agree, and recommend that an adaptation should be made, our Housing Assets Section will arrange for the work to be carried out.

## Making improvements to your home

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You have the right to make alterations and improvements to your home, but you must obtain written consent from Housing before you start. This is in addition to any planning permission that may be required. We can only refuse permission with good reason.



We will need full details, including specifications and drawings, before allowing you to do the work. You may also need approval from the Council's Planning and Economic Development team if the work involves building control regulations or a Planning Application (or both). You must not attach a Satellite TV Dish to the wall of your home if you live in a flat block where planning rules apply or a non-traditional building (of non-brick construction). Such fixtures lead to water penetration and corrosion which can eventually threaten the structure of the building.

## **The right to repair**

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If something is broken or is not working properly in your home, it may be covered under the Government's Right to Repair scheme. This means we should fix certain urgent problems within a target time. These repairs (called 'qualifying repairs') should normally cost no more than £250. Some examples are shown below:

Repairs that should be carried out within one working day:

- you have no water, electricity or gas, or the gas supply is reduced
- there is a major leak from a pipe, tank or cistern
- the flue to an open fire or boiler is blocked
- the heating or hot water are not working between 31 October and 1 May

- the sewage drain or soil stack are blocked (or you only have one toilet and it cannot be flushed)
- dangerous electrical lighting or other fittings.

Repairs that should be carried out within three working days:

- there is a partial loss of water or electricity
- the heating or hot water are not working between 1 May and 31 October
- a tap cannot be turned.

Repairs that should be carried out within seven working days:

- the roof is leaking
- a door entry phone is not working.

You can find more information on the right to repair on the Government's website [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) or ask us for a copy of the leaflet 'A better deal for tenants – your right to repair'.

## **The home improvements compensation scheme**

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You may be entitled to compensation when you move, if you have made improvements to your home with the Council's prior permission. There are certain 'qualifying improvements', for example central heating installation or double glazing. Upper and lower limits of £3,000 and £50 are set. Compensation payments are based on the cost of the improvements and depreciation over time, along with wear and tear. The Council can also apply discretion if costs appear excessive, or the improvements are of a higher standard than would normally be expected.

Professional fees are not included, or the cost of your own labour if you do the work yourself. Tenants purchasing under the Right to Buy are excluded, as are tenants evicted with a court order.

Claims for compensation must be made in writing to the Director of Housing, with evidence of payments, within 14 days of your tenancy coming to an end.

The following improvements may qualify:

- bath or shower, wash-hand basin
- toilet
- kitchen sink and work surfaces for preparing food
- storage cupboards in bathroom or kitchen
- central heating, hot water boilers and other types of heating
- thermostatic radiator valves
- pipe, water tank or cylinder insulation
- loft and cavity wall insulation
- draught proofing of external doors or windows
- double glazing or other window replacement, or secondary glazing
- rewiring, or the provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings (including smoke detectors)
- security measures (excluding burglar alarms).

Interior decoration (painting and wallpapering) **does not** qualify for compensation.

For further information contact your local Housing Management Officer.



## Mutual exchange repairs

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If you move home as part of a mutual exchange, you may find that some of the repair jobs usually done by the Council become your responsibility. This can happen where a previous tenant made alterations or installed non-standard council fixtures and fittings. Before agreeing to an exchange you should check very carefully whether any work of this kind has been carried out, and be prepared to take over responsibility for some repairs and maintenance if the exchange goes ahead. A Housing Repairs Officer will carry out a property and electrical inspection of your current home before you exchange.

It is up to the ingoing tenant to make sure that all fixtures and fittings are present when they move into a property, they should report any missing or damaged items as the council will be able to recharge the outgoing tenant. If the outgoing tenant has carried out any alterations to fixtures and fitting that should become defective, then these will only be replaced with our standard fittings.

You are strongly advised to read Tenants Handbook leaflet 6 'Moving Home with the Council', which gives more detailed information on repairs following mutual exchanges.

## Who is responsible for a repair?

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The list below indicates whether a repair is the responsibility of the Council or the tenant, and how long the work should take. We cannot list every type of repair, so you may need to phone the Housing Repairs Section on **01992 564199** for advice. Please note that repair categories can change, depending on the severity of the repair.

If a repair is needed due to damage caused by a tenant we will recharge for the cost of the work, plus an administration cost and VAT. We will also recharge for faults caused by alterations that do not meet current regulations. Where tenants have installed their own fixtures and fittings, these will only be replaced with our standard fittings. A whole kitchen will not be replaced if one unit is defective.

All repairs that are your responsibility can be carried out by Housing Repairs, at your request. You will be charged for the cost of the work, plus administration and VAT. If you are over 60 years of age, the Council's Handyperson Service may be able to help you. The service provides reputable contractors to carry out minor repairs, and work to prevent falls in the home, like fitting grab-rails and handrails. The service is free to people who are over 60, retired and on a means-tested benefit (such as Council Tax Benefit or Pension Guarantee Credit), for work costing up to a maximum of £150. Minor repairs costing more than this can be carried out but you will have to pay the excess. If you are not on a means tested benefit the Handyperson Service can still put you in touch with a suitable contractor to carry out your work, but you will have to arrange the work and pay for it in full yourself. For information on the Handyperson service phone 01992 564467 or 01992 564086.

Item	Responsibility	Repair Category	Other Information
Airing racks	T		
Basins, baths, sinks, including defective taps (not tap washers)	C	B/C	Unless damaged by tenant.
Brickwork repairs	C	C/D/E	Category A/B if dangerous.
Chimney stacks and pots	C	C/D/E	Category A/B if dangerous.
Chimney sweeping	T		
Clothes lines and posts	T		Except communal areas, category C.

Item	Responsibility	Repair Category	Other Information
Curtain poles, rails and battens	T		
Coat rails, hooks, wall brackets and shelving	T		
Doors (external) including frames, windows, woodwork or UPVC repairs (also see glazing)	C	C/D/E	Higher priority if insecure, sometimes held for external programme.
Doors (internal) including frames and latches	C	D	Excluding tenant's own furniture. Tenant's damage rechargeable.
Door locks and keys	T		Except faulty or worn out locks, category C. Lost keys, forcing entry and damage are tenant's responsibility and rechargeable.
Door furniture	T		Includes: Letter boxes, spy holes, security chains and numbering.
Double glazed sealed units	C	D	Council responsible for defective seals. See 'Glazing' for broken glass.
Drainage, waste pipes and blockages	C	A/B	Misuse and blockages caused by tenants, rechargeable.
Electric plugs, fuses and bulbs	T		

Item	Responsibility	Repair Category	Other Information
Electric sockets, bulb holders (excluding table lamps) wiring and main fuses and fuse board	C	A/B/C	Higher priority if loss of power, excludes tenant's own fittings and alterations to the system (can be rechargeable)
External decorations	C	D/E	Programmed maintenance see page 2.
Fascias, soffits & barge boards	C	C/D/E	
Fencing (boundary)	C	D/E	Replace with chain link fencing - except for hedgerows deemed to be fencing.
Fencing (dividing)	T		First two meters of rear fence ('gossip' or 'privacy' fence) Council's responsibility. If there is no fence, regardless of circumstances, the Council will define the dividing line with posts and two strands of wire.
Fireplace, hearths, frets, grates and bars	T		Tiled surround and brickwork are Council's responsibility.
Floorboards	C	C/D	All floor coverings are tenant's responsibility. Tenant's responsibility to remove coverings if repair work required to floorboards.
Garages	C	C/D/E	Tenant is responsible for keys and garage security.

Item	Responsibility	Repair Category	Other Information
Gardens (see also paths), including rear garden, paths and patios.	T		All green gardening is tenant's responsibility. Front access path, edging around the building (apron) and manholes are Council's responsibility.
Gates	C/T	D/E	Hinges and fasteners are tenant's responsibility.
Gas services and appliances	C		Contact gas servicing contractor, excluding tenant's appliances.
Glazing	T	D	Exemption for people of state pension able age or for proven vandalism (responsible person prosecuted or given police caution).
Gutters	C	D	
Heating (other than gas)	C	A/B	Excluding tenant's appliances.
Hot water, cylinder jacket	C	D/E	Part of insulation programme.
Immersion heater	C	B	Excluding tenant's fittings.
Internal decorations	T		Assistance provided through internal decorating programme for older people.

Item	Responsibility	Repair Category	Other Information
Internal woodwork, including skirtings, and cupboards	C	D	Excluding tenant's own fittings.
Kitchen unit and worktops, Council fitted mixer taps	C	D	Excluding tenant's own fittings.
Loft and main storage tank insulation	C	D	
Outbuildings and sheds	C	D/E	Excluding tenant erected buildings. Locks and keys as for doors.
Overflows	C	A/B	
Paths (see also gardens)	C	D/E	Access path to front door and edging around the building (apron) only. Tenant responsible for side and rear garden paths, patios and hardstandings.
Plaster and external rendering (except surface repair as part of tenant decorations)	C	D	
Plumbing, interior pipework and stop cocks (not central heating)	C	A/B	Excludes connections to appliances such as washing machines and dishwashers.
Roofs	C	C/D/E	Higher priority if dangerous.
Sanitary ware including WC pan, bath, basin etc	C	C	Seats, plugs, chains, lids, tenant's responsibility. Tenant's damage rechargeable.

Item	Responsibility	Repair Category	Other Information
Showers including: electric showers, enclosures, curtains, curtain rails, pumps, heads and hoses	<b>C</b>	<b>C/D</b>	Excluding fittings not fitted by the Council.
Smoke alarms	<b>T</b>		Tenant's responsibility to provide install and maintain, except alarms hard wired into electricity by the Council.
Solid fuel appliances (primary heating source)	<b>C</b>	<b>C/D</b>	Tenant responsible for chimney sweeping, also see 'Fireplace'.
Stairs, handrails, balustrading	<b>C</b>	<b>B/C</b>	Rechargeable if tenant alters handrails or balustrading.
Tap washers	<b>T</b>		
Tiles (floor and wall)	<b>T</b>		Except first row of tiles above wash handbasin, bath or sink.
Water butts	<b>T</b>		
Water heaters	<b>C</b>	<b>B/C</b>	Excludes tenant's own fittings.

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>C</b> = Council Responsibility <b>T</b> = Tenant Responsibility
<b>Repair Categories</b>	<b>A</b> = Emergency (24hrs) <b>B</b> = Emergency (3 Days) <b>C</b> = Urgent (7 Days) <b>D</b> = Routine (6 Weeks) <b>E</b> = Planned Maintenance (See page 3 for further details)



## How to contact us:

Reporting defects by phone: Call **01992 564199** (during office hours)

Emergencies only (outside office hours) phone **01992 564000**

Report online **[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing)**

Email: **[housingrepairs@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:housingrepairs@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)**

For planned maintenance enquiries phone our Housing Assets Section on **01992 564203**

The information given in this leaflet was correct at February 2011. Please be aware that there may have been changes since that time, such as new laws or council policies.

Please tell us if you would like this information provided in any other way, as a large print version for example.

Telephone: 01992 564292

Epping Forest District Council

Housing Directorate, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex CM16 4BZ

Telephone: Epping (01992) 564000 [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing)

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