



Repairs Policy

The Villages Housing Association Limited

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(Summarises revisions to the document)

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Distribution / Alert

This document and subsequent changes to it will be distributed to/alerted to the following staff members or groups:

Team Managers	All Departmental Directors
Team Members	All Housing staff
Board Members	VHA, VCHA, SVEMC, FHEMC.

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Scope of the Policy

1.1. Scope

The Villages Housing Group (VHG) will provide a repair and maintenance service that is sensitive to the needs of the individual, efficient, responsive, flexible, accountable and fair. The Association will ensure that it meets the high standards expected by our tenants. VHG will safeguard the future of the Association's properties, the environment and comply with legislation and regulation.

This policy applies to all properties for which the Association is responsible under the terms of its tenancy agreements, leases or management agreements.

This repair policy will describe the activities and responsibilities involved in delivering a repair service. The policy will act as a guide for all housing repair and maintenance issues and will be available to staff, tenants, leaseholders and prospective tenants.

The Association will maintain its housing stock by responding to repair needs and prioritising jobs according to needs and circumstances. e.g. the greater the inconvenience to the tenant, or risk to the structural fabric, the higher the priority.

Planned preventative maintenance will be completed with emphasis on work that is the Association's statutory duty to complete in a timely way e.g. gas safety checks that must be completed in each 12 month period.

Planned improvements will be carried out on buildings that need upgrading because of their age and the condition.

A detailed procedure guide accompanies this policy, to be used as an staff induction and training aid.

1.2. Principles

- A.** The following principles of repairs reporting procedures will apply.
- B.** There will be clear and straightforward arrangements to enable tenants to report repairs, including out of hours emergencies.
- C.** The Association will produce this policy or parts of it by request in other languages and formats such as Large Print, Braille or Audio CD.

- D.** We will publish a series of service standard leaflets relating to this and other policies; which will also be available in other languages and formats.
- E.** Each tenant, on signing for their tenancy, will receive a copy of the Association's 'Tenants Handbook'.
- F.** Repairs will be carried out in accordance with published timescales and tenants will be kept up to date regarding any delays.
- G.** Repair requests will be sent to tenants in writing confirming the timescale for completion, the name of the contractor, a Satisfaction Survey and reply-paid envelope.
- H.** Wherever possible appointments will be arranged at a time to suit the tenant to carry out work or inspections.
- I.** All Villages staff will accept repair requests and report repairs which come to their attention.
- J.** Staff who order and monitor repairs will have appropriate technical and customer service training.
- K.** Completed repairs will be inspected on a sample basis to ensure satisfactory standards are achieved and tenants are satisfied with the service provided.
- L.** Vulnerable individuals or groups will be given priority for service delivery.
- M.** Villages Housing Association will regularly monitor and report tenant satisfaction with the repairs service provided and other key performance indicators set by the Board.

1.3. Strategy Plan

The repairs policy, its related procedures and service standards, share the objectives that are stated as priorities in the Association's strategic plan, which are:

- to put the customer first in all that we do;
- to deliver a service that is right first time, on time;
- to have the right person with the right skills in the right role;
- to demonstrate equality and diversity in all that we do;
- to have the right resource in the right place at the right time;
- to demonstrate value for money in all that we do;
- to create sustainable communities;
- to attract, retain and grow the customer base;
- to have the right tools to deliver our business plans;
- to demonstrate that we manage risks in all that we do;
- to deliver against budgets and secure funding for future growth.

The Association aims to provide a repair service for its tenants that:

- provides a prompt, efficient, effective and responsive repair service;
- ensures tenants have clear information about the operation of the repair service and the Association's responsibility to tenants;
- clarifies tenant responsibility for internal decorating, certain minor repairs and general standards of upkeep within the property;
- achieves high standards of customer care;
- maintains a flexible approach that enables service delivery to be targeted according to need;
- complies with The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (consolidated by 1996 Housing Act);
- ensures homes are warm, dry and in a good state of repair;
- monitors the performance of the repairs service by taking into account feedback from tenants;
- gives equality of access to the service;
- makes the best use of resources and staff time.

2. Equality & Diversity

The Association believes that all people should be treated with dignity and respect and will work to maintain a culture that promotes equality of opportunity and celebrates diversity.

Consideration will be taken for tenants' language, disability, and vulnerability. The Association wants people to live safely in their homes, free from harassment and prejudice.

The Association will not treat anyone less favourably because of their age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, or anything else that may cause someone to be treated with injustice.

Our work focuses on individual groups within our community who may be disadvantaged and therefore require help the most. We will endeavour to ensure we have procedures and standards in place that reflect our wishes to promote equality and diversity and our commitment to equality of access to services.

3. The Repairs Service

3.1. How the Repair and Maintenance service is delivered

The repair and maintenance service is delivered via: -

- Responsive Repairs – Day to Day repairs
- Planned Maintenance Works - Cyclical repairs
- Planned Improvement and Major – Capital repairs
- Void Property Repairs - Re-let Repairs
- Aids and Adaptation Works

3.2. Responsive Repairs - Day to Day Repairs

These are emergency, urgent and routine repairs, which cannot be left until the planned programmes without posing a threat to the safety, health and security of the tenant or the deterioration of the buildings.

3.3. Planned Maintenance Works - Cyclical Repairs

This is planned maintenance works deal with the gradual and predictable deterioration of buildings. This includes regular external painting and the inspection of certain items, for example, annual gas safety checks.

3.4. Planned Improvement and Major Repairs - Capital Works

These planned improvements are longer term, non-urgent work involving replacement of parts and improvements of buildings due to their age and condition, e.g. re-roofing.

3.5. Re-let Repairs – Voids

These repair or improvement works are carried out to empty properties in preparation for re-letting to a new tenant. These works may be minor or major in nature, depending on the age and condition of the property.

3.6. Aids and Adaptation Works

These are improvements, upgrades or specialist installation works, such as lifts and hoists, undertaken to enable older or disabled tenants to continue living independently in their home. These works may be minor or major in nature, which are usually recommended by an Occupational Therapist.

3.7. Responsibility for repairs

The Association is required to comply with statutory requirements and the rules and guidance issued by the Government and its agencies.

Relevant legislation and guidance from regulators is extensive and broad ranging. It is also subject to frequent change and re-interpretation. In general, the following are the broad areas of compliance:

- Landlord and Tenant Law and Regulation
- Defective Premises Law and Regulation
- Health and Safety Law and Regulation

- Civil and Human Rights Legislation

The Association has a legal obligation to keep the structure of each dwelling in good repair and to keep it 'wind and watertight'. However, responsibility for repairs is shared between the Association, its tenants and leaseholders.

These responsibilities are identified in the Association's procedures and standards.

In some instances, repairs will be required to building components that are jointly owned by the Association and private property owners. Examples include shared chimney stacks, paths and drains etc.

The Association's procedures and standards include provision for complying with the Party Wall Act 1996 and the principles of a 'good neighbour' in respect of making arrangements to complete works and share costs etc.

3.7.1. The Association's Responsibilities

Under Section 11 of the Landlord & Tenant Act 1985, the landlord is responsible for the exterior, the structure and all major interior repairs.

Section 11 requires the landlord to:

- "Keep in repair the structure and exterior of the dwelling house [including drains, gutters and external pipes],
- To keep in repair and proper working order the installations in the dwelling house for the supply of water, gas and electricity and for the sanitation [including basins, sinks, baths and sanitary conveniences but not other fixtures and fittings and appliances for making use of the supply of water, gas or electricity], and
- To keep in repair and proper working order the installations in the dwelling-house for space heating and heating water."

3.7.1.1. Housing Act 2004

Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004, which came into force on 6th April 2006, repeals the provisions in the Housing Act 1985 s604 regarding fitness standards. It is replaced with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This system is based on the principal that "any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor."

There are 29 categories of hazard which the Association is obliged to address where they exist. Hazards fall into Category 1 or Category 2. For Category 1 hazards, the local authority, which is the enforcing

authority, has a statutory duty to take action to make sure that the Association addresses the hazard.

3.7.2. Repairs for which the Association is not responsible

There are certain works that the Association does not carry out on our properties, for example, the tenant is responsible for minor interior repairs such as changing fuses, replacing plugs and chains to bath and wash-hand basins, and replacing light bulbs.

'Tenants' responsibilities' are clarified within the Tenancy Agreement and Tenants' Handbook.

3.8. Reporting repairs

Tenants are required, under the terms of their tenancy agreement, to report damage, faults or disrepair immediately to the Association. Repairs can be reported as follows:

- by telephone
- by letter
- to any member of Villages staff
- by visiting the local housing office
- by e-mail
- by fax
- by the Association's website (from Summer 2009)

Outside office hours, for emergency repairs and heating/gas emergencies, the Association provides appropriate telephone numbers.

The Association advises tenants how to access services using a wide variety of promotional sources including the Tenants Handbook and Service Standards, which are regularly reviewed and updated.

3.9. Repair Classifications and Timescales

Responsive Repairs are classified into four groups (Emergency, Urgent, Routine and Batched) and the maximum response time for each is different.

Villages Housing has a diverse customer base, some of whom are vulnerable, and we are committed to providing services that meet their needs. In deciding the timescales for carrying out repairs we will take into account the circumstances and needs of the individual household.

In special circumstances we will undertake some repairs more quickly, where:

- The tenant's sense of security is affected
- The tenant has physical/sensory disabilities
- The tenant's mobility is affected
- The tenant's health and safety is affected, especially that of young children
- The tenant is living with terminal illness
- The tenant is living with AIDS
- The tenant has learning disabilities
- The tenant has a personality disorder or mental health problem
- The tenant is at risk from domestic abuse
- The tenant is suffering harassment and the repair will address security/safety issues
- The tenant is an older person

The list is a general guide only, as there may be other people who consider themselves to be vulnerable or suffering from a severe medical condition. The Association recognises that the scope of tenants at risk or vulnerable, or who may become vulnerable, changes with conditions and circumstances.

The Association will continually review the necessity for customer sensitivity and confidentiality awareness training for staff and contractors.

3.9.1. Emergency Repairs

An emergency repair is restricted to circumstances where there is danger to life, a safety hazard, the potential for more extensive damage or is needed to ensure a home is secure. We intend to attend to emergency repairs within 24 hours.

3.9.2. Urgent Repairs

Urgent repairs are those which, if not repaired, will cause substantial discomfort to the tenant and potential damage to the property. Urgent repairs will be completed by within 5 working days.

3.9.3. Routine Repairs

A routine repair can be anything to do with the fabric of the building that does not immediately affect daily living or health and safety. Routine repairs will be completed within 20 working days of the repair being ordered.

3.9.4. Batched Repairs

From time to time it will be necessary to batch non-urgent repairs to be carried out on a planned basis rather than a reactive basis, or alternatively the Association may consider it to be more efficient and cost effective to delay a repair until a planned programme of works is due.

We will inform tenants if the repair is to be placed in a planned programme, rather than being dealt with under the responsive repair classification. Wherever possible, the tenant will be informed of this at the time that the repair is requested, but no later than 5 days after reporting the repair. We will also give the tenant an expected start and completion date for the programme, where this is available.

3.10. Appointments

Villages Housing offer and arrange morning or afternoon appointments from 8am to 7pm, Monday to Friday, and 8am to 12 noon on Saturday - in 2-hour slots for tenants who want them for:

- Pre inspections
- The work to be carried out
- Post inspections

3.11. Inspecting Works

The Association undertakes pre and post inspection of repair works to:

- properly interpret tenant repair requests;
- control the quality of works;
- monitor the customers' satisfaction with the service delivered.

3.11.1. Pre Inspections

Pre-inspections of tenant repair requests are required where it is necessary to more fully describe the works or diagnose the repair to ensure the works are delivered right first time.

To ensure that there is no unnecessary delay in response to emergency or urgent repair requests, pre-inspections will not be undertaken for these categories unless:

- The tenant is unable to fully explain the problem;
- The repair is structural in nature.

In such cases the potential repair will be inspected immediately.

For 'routine' repair requests, the criteria determining the necessity for a pre-inspection are detailed in the procedure guide that accompanies this policy.

Pre-inspection of 'routine' repairs is by appointment with the tenant and the inspection completed within 5 working days of the repair request being made.

The frequency of pre-inspections carried out by the Association are monitored against a target indicator (10%) to determine the necessity for refresher diagnostic training for front line repairs staff.

3.11.2. Post Inspections

Post inspection of tenant repair requests are required to control the quality and costs of works being delivered to:

- measure tenant satisfaction with the contractor and the completed works;
- to respond to a tenants' complaint about unacceptable standards of work or contractor performance where the repair has not rectified the problem.

Wherever practicable, post-inspection of external repairs will be by prior appointment with the tenant to provide access. However, to reduce this burden on both the tenant (in taking time from work etc) and VHG's resources, post-inspection of external repairs may be carried out without prior arrangement, at the discretion of the inspecting officer, having regard to customer care and customer sensitivities etc.

The decision to carry out post-inspection of work is based on a risk assessment approach. The Association targets those jobs considered to require the greatest control for quality and cost management:

- Multi-trade jobs or jobs involving sub-contractors;
- Complex or high-cost jobs;
- Contractors where there has been poor performance in the past;
- Trades where there has been poor performance in the past;
- New contractors.

The frequencies of post-inspections being carried out by the Association are monitored against a target indicator (10%) to determine the level of resources necessary to manage and control the quality and cost of works.

This target indicator also provides a benchmark against which we will judge the overall standard of service being delivered by the contractor e.g. the necessity to employ more resources to inspect works greater than 10% may be an indicator of a poorly performing contractor.

4. Vulnerable Groups

We will ensure that vulnerable groups within our customer base are adequately supported so that they are able to benefit from our services.

We recognise that those described as vulnerable can not always be precisely defined. However, Villages as a landlord will take responsibility and plan for specific needs wherever possible. We will use tenant profiling as a vital tool to help us to do this.

5. Villages Service Standards

Service standards have been produced and are available to existing and potential customers from our offices or from the website at www.villages.org.uk

- Repairs priorities
- Keeping your home in good repair
- What you can expect from your new home
- Code of conduct for contractors
- Complaints

6. Confidentiality

Any personal information provided to the Association regarding tenants' personal or financial circumstances will be dealt with in the strictest confidence. All data held in respect of tenants will be recorded and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

7. Implementation

The Head of Housing will ensure that the Customer Service Team is adequately staffed and that workloads remain manageable to ensure that the service is delivered in accordance with this policy.

The Head of Housing will ensure that there is a sufficient range of procedures in place to enable staff to be informed about how to deliver the Repairs Policy in accordance with policy requirements.

7.1. Responsibility

Overall responsibility for implementation of this policy lies with the Head of Housing.

The Housing Managers (Fitton Hill and Stockbridge Village) are responsible for the application of this policy, its procedures and standards, monitoring performance, identifying shortfalls and recommending actions to rectify situations as applicable.

7.2. Consultation

Prior to making any changes to this policy the Association will consider the view of:

- Tenants
- All relevant staff
- Senior Management Team
- The Tenants' Forum
- Board
- Tenants Groups and individual interested tenants
- Relevant outside agencies

8. Training

The Association will provide all staff responsible for implementing this policy, its procedures and standards with appropriate training.

Training will be given to:

- New staff
- Existing staff as a refresher as required
- All relevant staff after change to policy/ legislation

9. Performance Monitoring

9.1. Targets

Villages Housing and its Board will agree annually with tenant representatives the targets for responsive repairs, voids, planned and cyclical maintenance, gas servicing and aids adaptations.

Performance against these targets will be presented to the Estate Management Committees bi-monthly.

9.2. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is measured by surveys and telephone calls. The level of customer satisfaction will be reported to the Estate Management Committees bi-monthly, together with action and responses relating to customer complaints and compliments etc.

10. Policy Review

The Association will undertake a policy and procedure review on a 24 month basis incorporating a review of staff training needs, to ensure that it continues to operate in line with best practice and that service improvements are made and implemented.

The Quality Assurance Team will be responsible for ensuring that reviews of this procedure are carried out.

There will be an automatic review of this procedure whenever there is a change of policy from The Tenant Services Authority, or legislation from the department for Communities and Local Government.

Findings and recommendations will be presented to the Association's Board.

Progress reports will be made to the Board to enable monitoring against strategic aims and objectives and agreed performance indicators.

Performance data will be included in the annual report to tenants.

11. Impact Assessment

A copy of the Impact Assessment for this policy is available separately by contacting the Head of Housing at The Villages Housing Association Limited, 2 Fircroft Road, Fitton Hill, Oldham OL8 2QN or by telephoning 0161 633 4060.

12. Other Policies That Apply

- Voids Policy
- Rechargeable Repairs Policy
- Tenant Involvement Policy
- Complaints Policy

- Compensation Policy
- Adaptations Policy
- Protection of Vulnerable Adults