



Milton Keynes
City Council



Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy



July 2024
Version 1



Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy

1 Introduction

Milton Keynes City Council has a statutory duty to provide a repairs service to maintain our housing stock and related assets to an acceptable standard.

Our Repairs & Maintenance Policy (RMP) sets out our approach to deliver repairs and investment work to council houses.

This policy covers our approach to responsive repairs, empty property works, planned maintenance and cyclical maintenance, where we have landlord responsibilities.

Responsive repairs – these are typically reported direct by customers or found through our routine management work, like tenancy audits. These are where we reactively fix something that is not working properly, like a tap.

Maintenance and investment work – this is where we renew individual things in a home, like a boiler. It also includes work such as replacing/upgrading things outside the home or block, like a roof. This work is normally identified by age and condition of things such as roofs or boilers.

Void works – this is work we do in properties when tenancies end to ensure they are to a lettable standard for the next tenant.

This repair, maintenance and investment work is funded from rental income or from recharges from tenants, shared owners or leaseholders. In this policy we explain how we balance competing priorities within the budget we have for repairs, maintenance and investment works. To support this decision making we have a set of aims and approaches which we share below.

The reference to “residents” in this Policy refers to tenants, leaseholders and shared owners.

2 Our aims

We aim to deliver responsive repairs and other works in a way that means properties are to standard and the work is done in a way that delivers value for money.

2.1 Responsive repairs

We aim to deliver effective repairs in a way that matches our priorities of having safe homes which are maintained to current standards. When we deliver repairs we aim to provide a prioritised repairs service so things are fixed first time where we can. We work closely with contractors and across MKCC Teams to support tenants in maintaining their

homes. This includes enabling access to do works or signposting tenants to support where needed. Our tenancy agreements give more detail on repairs. Tenants can also take a look at our Tenant Handbook which explains tenant responsibilities and describes ours, along with important dos and don'ts. This is summarised below along with repair timeframes, how to get in touch and some useful information on how we gain access for required inspections or repairs.

Tenants responsibilities:

- take care of their home, and any fixtures and fittings we have supplied;
- keep the property in a clean condition and the internal decoration in good order;
- report any repairs needed and allow us reasonable access to do repairs and for safety reasons such as annual gas servicing;
- follow the tenants' alterations process to get permission from MKCC for anything more than decorating, changing carpets or putting up shelves;
- take responsibility to maintain their garden or outdoor space

Tenants are responsible for some repairs and maintenance and for keeping the home in a good and clean condition. This includes 'making good' any work they have done (for instance after removing shelves that were put up).

It is the tenants responsibility to make sure they keep us updated with correct contact details and accurate personal information. If anything changes during tenancies, tenants need to let us know.

Repairs tenants are responsible for:

- Damage to the dwelling caused by tenants, their family or visitors, including broken glazing.
- Additional door, window and shed locks
- Small patch repairs to ceilings or walls. Such as where a light fitting has been changed or shelves taken down
- Cooker connection and tenants' appliances
- Fuses, electrical plugs
- Carpets and flooring
- Gardens - dwarf walls, ponds, trellis, landscaping and cutting back of shrubbery and grass
- Internal decoration - papering, woodwork, coving, painting
- Light bulbs, light shades and light fittings
- Pelmet, batten and curtain rails
- Sink and bath plugs and chains
- Smoke alarms - cleaning and weekly testing
- Toilet seats – refix or replace
- Television aerials and satellite dishes other than communal aerials erected by us
- Making sure your extractor fans are clear of dust or anything else so they keep working
- Clearing gutters (except blocks)

How to report a repair

We use a company called Mears to carry out repairs.

- Emergency repairs: contact them right away on 0330 123 2522, at any time.
- Routine repairs: the easiest way and quickest way is to report your repair online, where you can arrange an appointment convenient to you
<https://mearsmk.activehousing.co.uk/repairs-postcode-picker/>

Alternatively email repairs.miltonkeynes@mearsgroup.co.uk with your contact details and a brief description of your repair, or call 0330 123 2522

- Smell gas? Call 0800 111 999 immediately then contact Mears.

Routine repairs happen Monday to Friday between 8am 5pm, although we will try to offer either a morning appointment (8am - 1pm) or an afternoon appointment (1pm – 5pm). If Mears has your mobile number, you will receive text notifications about your appointment. Mears staff and contractors will show you identification when they arrive. If you have any concerns, please call Mears on 0330 123 2522 to check.

If you need to rearrange your appointment, please call Mears on 0330 123 2522 as soon as possible.

There are repairs and inspections that we carry out on a cyclical basis including gas safety, fire doors and electrical installation inspections, which we do for your safety and wellbeing. It is important to let us in for inspection visits as well as to carry out repairs that have been identified. If you do not, this may lead to legal proceedings to gain access and force entry to fulfil our legal obligation. This is detailed in our Tenants Handbook. There is also information on service charges for residents.

Emergency And Routine Repair Time Frames

Our aim is to complete the work on the first visit but depending on the repair it may be necessary for a follow up visit. If that's the case, you'll be told at the time.

Emergency Repairs These repairs are attended to within 4 hours and can be reported 24/7	If any of the following are causing danger and need to be made safe: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Burst water pipe• Boiler – drain down or make safe• Chimney – make safe if dangerous• Electrical – communal hall and landing lights• Glazing – make safe board up• Immersion heater (if it's your only source of hot water)• Broken locks to gain access (not lost or stolen keys)• Walls, masonry, or walkways – make safe if dangerous Other things which are unsafe if left
Repairs attended to within 24 hours	Emergency Gas issues (not leaks)

and can be reported 24/7	
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All other repair work is carried out as a routine repair and will be attended to within 28 days.

Inspections and Maintenance

Every year we need to carry out important inspections and maintenance. The inspections we carry out are outlined in the tenancy handbook and we have access processes in place specifically for gas and electrical safety checks and works.

- If you have a gas boiler or fire, we must check it each year to make sure there are no carbon monoxide fumes. We will also check your smoke and heat detectors, and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Registered engineers will carry out a five-year inspection of the property's electrics to make sure they are in good condition and will not cause a fire or shock.
- We have a rolling routine of safety checks for communal areas and things such as gas appliances within individual properties.

Chargeable repairs are when we do repairs to damage that has happened because of neglect of or vandalism by a resident, member of household or other person. This includes

- Leaving possessions or rubbish at the end of tenancies
- Doing alterations to the property where this was not authorised by us
- Repeatedly asking us to replace sets of keys or access fobs
- Out of hours costs where our contractor is called out as a convenience service for an emergency that is not an emergency in the view of the contractor
- Damage to the property, inside or out

We encourage residents to seek support from their Housing Officer if they need to support to manage their home or tenancy.

Information on how to ask to do work in your home is on our website.

Leaseholders

It is the leaseholders responsibility to maintain and manage repairs within their own home. MKCC is responsible for keeping the communal parts of the blocks looked after. All information about roles and responsibilities can be found in your leasehold agreement. MKCC does not have a singular leasehold agreement that covers all of the properties we own. These are on an individual basis and reflect the contribution on service charges or other fees and this is what we follow in each case.

2.2 Maintenance and Investment

We pay for all maintenance and investment work from from funding generated from rental income and services charges. We call this the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). We are

focusing our maintenance and investment programme on our responsibilities and how we comply with the new Consumer Standards and the Social housing Act 2023.

This means that we have the priorities and standards which are set by regulators. Recently these regulatory requirements have significantly increased which means, in achieving a balanced budget, we have no choice on some works we have to do. This in turn impacts how often we can renew things like kitchens and bathrooms, making it happen less often so the budget can be spent on keeping homes safe or to standard. It also means that we sometimes need to access homes where we have not before.

2.3 Void works

When tenancies end we have to check certain things to ensure the property is safe and ready for a new tenant. Our Housing Officers do tenancy inspections to support you in making sure your home is maintained during your tenancy and handed back in a good state of repair and there are no unauthorised alterations or rubbish left in the property by you. Please get in touch with your Housing Officer to arrange one of these or to get any support in maintaining your home and outside spaces. When your tenancy ends we will inspect the property and identify what works are needed. You will be told of any potential recharges.

The work we do in voids is to bring the property up to a lettable standard. So incoming tenants should not expect new kitchens, bathrooms or windows. These are only renewed where required.

We work hard to get void properties ready to let as quickly as we can, this means that another family will get their new home sooner. To support us on that, we need tenants to:

- Maintain the property
- Report repairs and allow us access to fix them
- Clear all belongings when you leave
- Ask us before you do work on the property
- Get in touch with your Housing Officer if you need support to maintain your tenancy

2.4 A note on mutual exchanges

While these are covered in more detail in your tenants handbook, we take the opportunity to remind tenants that when mutual exchanging you are taking the property as seen which includes being happy with the property layout, it's condition, fixtures, fittings, etc. As part of a mutual exchange, tenants take the property as seen e.g. if there are non-standard items for example kitchen/bathroom/flooring that were the current tenant's responsibility, then the new incoming tenant takes that responsibility on.

If you take a look at the property and are unsure, please get in touch with the Housing Officer to discuss any issues. This includes making sure the property meets your housing needs, flagging any repair issues or works which looks like it might not have been done by us.

3 Right to Repair

We give the right to repair, in line with the Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994, to all our tenants. This means we must complete certain urgent repairs that might affect health and safety or security of tenants within specified

timescales (these are known as qualifying repairs). Failure to complete the repairs within specified timescales can lead to compensation payable to tenants.

MKCC will not accept liability for Right to Repair compensation when:

- The tenant says the repair is no longer required
- The tenant fails to give access for the repair or inspection to be carried out
- The tenant misses an appointment that has been arranged for an inspection or repair to be carried out
- Repairs that, when carried out, are found to have a total value exceeding £250
- Where the repair in question is a rechargeable repair and/or is the tenant's responsibility to remedy

4 Planned Programmes of Work

We have a programme of planned works so we can manage and know the condition of the housing stock with the aim to also reduce the need for responsive repairs.

4.1 Planned improvement works

MKCC does larger work to properties and blocks where they need it. This varies year on year and is driven by regulatory standards and stock condition. Typically it includes fabric works to structures and roofs and some component replacements, like boilers and windows.

Priorities for planned investment will be based on:

- Safety standards for social housing
- Energy performance of the home
- Keeping properties to a decent homes standard. Such as components reaching the end of their life cycle and being in need of replacement (identified through inspection)

When carrying out investment work, MKCC will do statutory consultation where required and offer choice if we can. Priorities for planned works will be informed by:

- Available budget
- Information detailed in the asset register / stock condition survey
- The risk and impact on the tenant and landlord of doing or not doing works

4.2 Planned (Responsive) Works

Planned (Responsive) work includes larger repairs works that become projects. These will have lead-in periods and may be subject to statutory consultation. Examples are large scale works to return an empty properties back to use or significant structural works.

4.3 Statutory Compliance and Cyclical Maintenance

Statutory compliance and cyclical maintenance are works which are repeated at regular intervals such as external painting and periodic testing. There will be a programme to cover these things. It can be expected to cover equipment or parts of properties that relate to things such as asbestos, gas, fire safety, passenger lifts/stair lifts, legionella work and

electrical checks and other similar items that need checking every so often. Inspections and maintenance are carried out in accordance with any statutory regulation or guidance.

4.4 Structural Issues

MKCC will prioritise the planned works of structural defects on a risk basis informed by the inspections and surveys. Typically we will attend, survey and check things are safe or make safe. Then we plan what works or approach is needed. This includes repairing or decommissioning.

5 Management of Damp and Condensation

Addressing damp and condensation in properties is a priority. We encourage tenants to report damp in their homes as we have a dedicated process to look into the causes and what is needed to fix it. This includes visiting to see what issues there are. We find out what the cause of any issues are and identify any works or other support that may be needed. Work will then be scheduled in with tenants and some properties may get follow up calls or visits after the work is done. This is to check that things are still fine, and to take a look if they are not. We encourage tenants to raise any queries on damp as a repair with our contractor. We monitor these, along with the works, alongside our contractor.

We continue to share information on damp and mould with tenants and it is published on our website and shared with affected tenants too. Please report any damp or mould issues in the same way you report repair needs.

6 Application to Alter/Tenant improvements

Some tenants want to make changes to their property. Things like putting up shelves, carpets or redecoration as per tenancy agreement is fine. However, for anything else, tenants must ask our consent and have received written permission before doing anything. Otherwise tenants will be liable for all costs to return the property to original condition. For example, if you wish to have a shed in your garden, you must ask our permission first or if you would like permission, to put up a television aerial or satellite dish. We can refuse permission and do refuse for these common ones below.

- Fit wood or laminate flooring – this is refused because it results in noise issue for others and you will incur costs and it costs us time at the end of your tenancy to have it removed and the original reinstated
- TV and Satellite Dishes are refused because it means making holes through walls from the outside, including where fire stopping can be needed
- Partition rooms – if a tenants home no longer matches the size of the family, they must raise this with their Housing Officer. Partitioning rooms is unsafe.
- Ponds, decking, external structures
- New bathrooms and kitchens

There is a risk that your home may contain asbestos which is safe until it is damaged or disturbed, no works should be completed without prior consent to ensure that the presence of asbestos can be checked.

To apply for permission, and to view a more detailed list of alterations. Please complete our tenants' alterations online form at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/repairs giving full details of what you propose to do.

7 Access and Refusal of works

We have a No Access Policy which has been developed to ensure that our tenants are safe and reduce the risk of unknown property degradation and prevent tenancy failure through early intervention and access. This policy details how MKCC will manage and enforce any access that is being continually denied by a tenant to undertake tenancy audits, repairs, servicing, maintenance, and planned work that is a legislative, contractual and/or regulatory requirement as a social landlord.

8 Communication and Customer focus

We aim to provide a service that meets our residents needs, focuses on the things that are important to them and builds a relationship of mutual respect. To make sure this happens we will focus on areas such as:

- Making it easy to report repairs, with a range of reporting routes.
- Effectively diagnosing repairs, and getting things right first time
- Making appointments that are convenient for residents, where an appointment is appropriate.
- Communicating effectively with residents if there are unavoidable delays.
- Asking residents if they are satisfied with the work, and using this feedback to make improvements.

In addition, staff working for the council, or its contractors will:

- Answer calls promptly and be polite, honest and helpful at all times.
- Introduce themselves when calling the customer by phone and will show photographic identification before entering a customer's home.
- Be polite.
- Explain what work is going to be carried out and discuss with the customer how this might affect them.
- Take care of customers' belongings whilst working in their property, protecting them from damage and dust for example and will make sure that materials and tools do not cause danger to anyone in the customers' home.
- Make sure that when having to use the customers' electricity that they ask first but wherever possible use portable battery tools. Where this is not possible the use of electricity will be kept to a minimum.
- Keep mess and rubbish to a minimum, making sure it is all removed at the end of the working day or when the job has been completed.

- Make sure that electricity, water and gas are connected at the end of each day wherever possible.

Residents are required to treat council staff and contractors with respect while they are working on their property. This can include things like keeping pets out of the way while work is being done.

The following need to be taken into consideration when access is required to complete a repair.

- Residents must allow authorised staff of the council or other agents/contractors into their home at all reasonable hours to inspect its condition, do any repairs needed, or improvements or to service appliances or to carry out work the council considers necessary to make sure the property and surrounding properties do not put the customer or anyone else at risk here possible.
- The council may need to gain access to homes to inspect, clean or repair a home or neighbouring dwelling, or any sewers, drains, pipes, wiring or cable serving a home or neighbouring dwelling.
- Authorised staff may need to enter a property without notice in an emergency, using reasonable force, if necessary, if we consider there is a risk of personal injury or damage to property or surrounding properties.
- Residents must not cause or commit or allow anyone living with them or visitors to cause or commit any form of harassment or other anti-social behaviour, and this applies to the way in which they treat our employees, agents and contractors.

Where appropriate a resident may ask for a security code word to be used to gain access. If given this will be made available to the member of staff or representative to give added security to residents that feel especially vulnerable.

9 Equality, diversity and inclusion

MKCC is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion for all and has its own Equality Policy. In line with this and the Equalities Act 2010, this policy considers the need to carry out repairs to some higher priority residents where someone in their home is known to us as vulnerable or needing assistance. Please tell us if you have needs, or if they change.

10 Regulatory Context

We aim to work to the regulatory standards set and within the legal arrangements, such as lease terms and tenancy agreements. This includes:

- To provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas, that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants and leaseholders,

offers value for money and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements 'right first time'.

- To meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes
- To provide tenants with accessible, relevant and timely information about how they can access services, the standards of housing services they can expect, how the council is performing against those standards, the service choices available to tenants, including any additional costs that are relevant to specific choices, progress of any repairs work, how tenants can communicate with them and provide feedback, the responsibilities of the tenant and provider and arrangements for tenant involvement and scrutiny
- To ensure a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas, demonstrating an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs, and value for money.

