

# London Borough of Harrow

## The Repairs Charter

### What is a repairs charter?

It is the guide to repairs, service and standards for tenants of Harrow Council.

We aim to provide a repairs service that:

- Meets the high standards you expect
- Is cost effective and within budget
- Safeguards the future of your home
- Protects the environment
- Meets our statutory and contractual repairing obligations

To meet these aims we will:

- Consult with tenants about our service
- Carry out repairs quickly and in one visit whenever possible
- Arrange appointments to carry out the work at a time that suits you
- Set a high standard of quality of work
- Listen to any problems about repairs and try to put them right
- Keep our spending within agreed budgets
- Consider the environmental impact of products we use
- At all times put the health and safety of our tenants first
- Publish information on how we are performing

### How will the repair people behave in my home?

We understand the importance of respecting your home and belongings and we have adopted the following code of practice:

The person inspecting or carrying out repairs will:

- Treat you and your home with respect and be polite and courteous to you at all times
- Visit your home and carry out any work at a time that suits you and by prior arrangement
- Introduce themselves and provide identification, before entering your home
- Check for any special arrangements e.g. children, pets etc
- Explain the nature of the work to be carried out and any safety issues involved
- Not enter your home if it appears that there are unsupervised children at home under the age of 18
- Keep your home safe in so far as it is reasonably practicable to do so by the person inspecting or carrying out repairs to your home
- Work tidily and clear away all unused materials at the end of each working day
- Only use your electricity, gas, telephone or water if you have given them permission
- Use clean dust sheets on all occasions and clean away all rubbish

- Not smoke in your home, use radio equipment or leave tools and equipment where they are a hazard
- Respect your privacy and confidential information
- Respond to special requests e.g. if English is not your first language or you have a disability / vulnerability.

## How do I report a repair?

You can report a repair or make enquires by:

- Calling Access Harrow on 0208 901 2630 [9am – 5 pm Monday to Friday]
- Emailing us at [housing@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:housing@harrow.gov.uk)
- Going to our website at [www.harrow.gov.uk](http://www.harrow.gov.uk)
- Requesting a repair in writing or visit our offices
- Telling any member of our housing staff
- Calling our out of hours emergency repairs on 0800 614 456

Which ever method you use to report a repair our staff will need to know as much detail as possible, so we can provide a quick solution for you. Within 3 hours of you reporting the repair our contractors will call you to make an appointment that is convenient to you, this will be 30 minutes for emergency repairs. Please ensure you tell them about any special arrangements to gain access to your home. We will also give you a unique reference number for all reported repairs

## What if I have special needs?

If you have special needs or are a vulnerable tenant, we may schedule the repairs faster than normal. We encourage you to tell us about any special circumstances when you report a fault so that we can prioritise it correctly.

You should ensure that you tell our staff about any disability, such as hearing or mobility restrictions, so that they can make special arrangements [e.g. knock louder or allow longer for the door to be opened] and we will record this information for all future repairs.

## Repair Priorities

Your repairs will be carried out within the following timescales or an appointment time which is more convenient to you:

- **Emergency repairs** - **Priority 1** within 4 hours
- **Urgent repairs** - **Priority 2** within 1-5 working days
- **Non – urgent repairs** - **Priority 3** within 1-20 working days
- **Batch repairs** - **Priority 4** within 90 days we will review/complete subject to funding.

## **What are emergency repairs?**

An emergency repair is any defect that is either an immediate danger to your safety, security or health or something that may lead to serious damage to the property. This could include the following:

- Gas leak
- Loss of water
- Burst pipe / flooding
- Loss of power
- Unsafe electrics
- Unusable toilet if only one in the home
- Unsecured ground floor window or door
- Offensive or racist graffiti
- Dangerous glazing in doors and windows

## **What are urgent repairs?**

These are defects that may cause discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to you or a third party, but are not a risk to you or the property. This could include the following:

- Blocked drains, sinks, baths or toilets [where there is a second toilet]
- Heating faults
- Minor electrical faults
- Roof leaks
- Entry phone failure
- Defective cistern / overflow
- Faulty communal TV aerial

## **What are Non – urgent repairs?**

These are defects that are not likely to cause serious discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to you or a third party. This could include the following;

- Repairs to doors, windows and floors
- Repairs to external walls and paths
- Clearing down pipes and gutters
- Repairs to plasterwork
- Repairs to kitchen fittings
- Minor plumbing faults

## **What are batch repairs?**

These are repairs that the council would like to complete but are low priority when there is competing demands from Priority 1, Priority 2 and Priority 3 and a limited budget. Each quarter the council will review the demand and subject to funds being available will batch the work in to one package and engage the contractor to complete. This could include:

- Fence repair / replacement
- Gate repair / replacement
- Tree pruning

## **Inspections**

In order to ensure we complete as many repairs as possible on the first attempt we may need to carry out an inspection to determine what level of work is required. Also to ensure the quality of the work we will inspect a number of completed repairs. In both instances we will require access to your home at a mutually convenient time.

We will also operate a telephone satisfaction survey for 20% of completed repairs as soon as possible after completion.

## **Do I have a “Right to Repair”?**

The “Right to Repair” scheme (as laid out in the Right to Repair Regulations 1994) gives you the right to have certain emergency or urgent repairs done quickly and to be paid compensation if we fail to do it within a reasonable timeframe.

To be eligible for this, a repair must be what is known as a qualifying repair. This means:

- It is classed as an emergency or urgent repair
- It has an estimated value of less than £250
- We have failed to complete the repair within the set timescales
- You have provided reasonable access arrangements

Further details on this scheme are available on the Governments website [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

## **Can I improve my home?**

You have the right to carry out your own improvements such as installing extra heating or a shower. However you must ask Harrow Council and get written agreement before you start the work for any improvement that could affect the structure / services of the building. We may apply some reasonable conditions when giving permission, but we will not refuse permission without good reason.

## **Will you charge me for any repairs?**

If you, your family or friends have caused damage to your property and this was not the result of normal wear and tear, you must repair the damage or we will charge you for doing the repair. If you are unable to pay the full amount, arrangements can be made for you to pay by instalments.

If you have been the victim of criminal damage, we will pay for the damage to be repaired, as long as you have a valid crime reference number from the police.

We do not repair or replace your personal or household goods and we would strongly recommend that you take out insurance to cover such failures. The council has negotiated an

insurance scheme for tenants, which can be paid weekly. Details are available on the council's website [www.harrow.gov.uk](http://www.harrow.gov.uk) - The recharge costs will include:

- A call out fee
- Cost of the works in full including VAT
- An admin fee of 10%

### **What if I lose my house keys?**

To avoid problems arising from loss of keys we strongly recommend that you leave a spare set of keys with family, friends or neighbours.

If you lose your keys, or get locked out you will be charged for any costs associated with gaining access to your home. This may include:

- A call out fee
- Cost of replacing all locks including VAT
- Cost of repairing any associated damage to the door / frame including VAT
- An admin fee of 10%

If you do call us to attend a lock out we will attend ASAP, however you may have to wait for this service as any other emergency repairs will be dealt with before dealing with lock outs.

### **Are there any restrictions on the repair service?**

We expect all tenants who rent a property from the council to take responsibility to ensure they, or their visitors do not cause any damage or misuse the property and when they give up the tenancy, the property is returned in a good clean condition with no rubbish.

There are a small number of circumstances where the repairs service may be limited to emergencies and "Right to Repair", they include:

- You have missed 3 consecutive appointments for repairs when you have agreed the appointment time
- The repair is due to be completed as part of a planned investment programme
- You have a proven history of violent or abusive behaviour towards staff, our contractors, or other residents.
- You have started the right to buy process
- An abandonment notice has been issued
- You are refusing to give access for the annual gas service
- You have seriously neglected to look after the property either internally, externally or both

You have the right to appeal against any decision to limit the service through our complaints / compliments process.

## Mutual Exchanges

In the event of you agreeing a mutual exchange an inspection will be completed prior to approval to ensure the property is in an acceptable condition. You will need to put right any damage or unauthorised work before you can exchange.

## What is planned investment and how will this affect repairs?

If your home is due to have planned investment work done in the near future [such as a new kitchen or bathroom], we will only carry out repairs if the fault:

- Is an emergency
- Poses a health and safety risk to you or visitors
- Is covered by the “right to repair”
- Is unrelated to the planned works
- Is causing serious inconvenience to you or visitors
- Is likely to cause further damage to the property

## What are the arrangements for servicing heating systems?

Each year we will need to carry out servicing works on all gas and some electric appliances. At the time they are required we will contact you to arrange an appointment that is convenient to you. Under current law we have a duty to inspect and ensure all gas appliances within your home are safe to use on an annual basis.

**You must allow us reasonable access to your home to carry out this safety check. Failure to respond to two appointment notices will result in the council taking legal action to force entry and you could be liable to pay the council's costs of obtaining entry to your home.**

## What service standards can I expect?

We are committed to improving the customer experience in the delivery of the repairs service. It is important to us that you are fully satisfied with the service. You can expect the following:

- When calling Access Harrow we aim to answer 90% of calls within 30 seconds
- The contractor will make an appointment with you within 3 hours of your call, this will be fast tracked for emergency repairs to 30 minutes
- We keep 90% of appointments made
- At least 95% of tenants are satisfied with the service
- We will inspect at least 10% of works after completion.
- Tenant and Leaseholder representatives will be involved in ongoing contractor appraisals
- We will give the utmost importance to any issue that affects the tenants health and safety
- We will take all complaints and service failure seriously and fully investigate them to put them right and learn from them to improve the service
- On average we will let all empty homes within 21 days

- At least 95% satisfaction with any improvement / planned work carried out in your home
- We will provide a range of appointments for a Saturday morning and some evenings for minor repairs
- We will service gas appliances every 12 months
- We will give you a reference number when you report a repair so you can track it's progress
- We will respond to all stage 1 complaints in 10 working days
- We will attempt to complete telephone satisfaction surveys for at least 20% of all repairs

## **Leaseholders**

Each lease can have different obligations and therefore any leaseholder should consult the actual lease agreement for their home, to see who is responsible for which repairs. Leases for the same scheme / block may be different. Generally regarding flats, the council will organise repairs and improvements to the structure of the building and the common parts. For any work costing more than £250 for each individual leaseholder, then Section 20 consultation will be undertaken. The leaseholder will be responsible for the internal repairs and decorations.

In cases of emergency communal repairs such as water / sewage leakage then the council will respond in line with the Priority 1 status and agree the repair liability at a later stage. Again the Health and Safety of the leaseholder is paramount.

A system will be in operation that will allow all leaseholders to view communal repairs for their block / scheme for the previous month, via the council's website [www.harrow.gov.uk](http://www.harrow.gov.uk)

## **Complaints / Compliments**

Anyone who wishes to make a complaint or compliment may do so either:

- In person
- By telephone (0208 901 2630)
- In writing ( by letter, fax, email, using the councils complaint form which is also available online)

Any member of staff will be able to accept a complaint or compliment.

The council operates a 3 stage complaints process. If you are still not happy with how we propose to resolve your complaint after stage 3, you can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman service. Contact details for the Ombudsman are available on their website [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

## **Who is responsible for which repairs?**

We are not able to list all repairs but the following table is designed to give some guidance on who is responsible for what repairs. This is only intended as general guidance as for instance some items listed under internal repairs will be the responsibility of the leaseholder as opposed to the council.

TYPE OF REPAIR	YOU	HARROW	PRIORITY
<b>Bathroom / Kitchen / Plumbing</b>			
Burst pipes / water escapes		•	P1
Bath panels		•	P3
Bath repairs [wear and tear]		•	P3
Blocked bath / sink / basin		•	P2
Blocked toilet [if only one]		•	P1
Broken toilet seat	•		
Cistern / handles [if only one]		•	P1
Cooker	•		
Cooker socket		•	P2
Kitchen units repair		•	P3
Leaking pipe		•	P1
Loss of water		•	P1
No hot water		•	P2
No water		•	P1
Plugs and chains	•		
Refix loose basin / WC		•	P3
Replace sealant to edge of fittings	•		
Replace tap		•	P2
Shower rail and curtain	•		
Shower repairs [if fitted by Harrow Council]		•	P3
Stopcock repairs		•	P3
Tiled splash back		•	P3
<b>Electrical</b>			
No power		• [Or supplier]	P1
No lights		•	P2
Florescent tubes and starters		•	P2
Light bulbs	•		
Reset tips / fuses	•		
Check electrics after water penetration		•	P1
Repair extractor fan		•	P3
Repair to white goods	•		
Mains powered smoke alarms		•	P2
Part loss of power		•	P2
Sockets cracked or loose		•	P2
Electrical storage heaters [if only heating]		•	P2
Communal lighting		•	P2
<b>General Internal Repairs</b>			
Door bell	•		
Broken handles and latches	•		



Door repairs – wear and tear		•	P3
Locks and keys	•		
Door replacement		•	P3
Internal decorations	•		
Air locks to radiators		•	P3
Unsafe timber, flooring or stair treads		•	P2
Ease windows		•	P3
Internal plaster work		•	P3
Hairline plaster cracks	•		
Hard wired smoke alarms		•	P2
Curtain rails	•		
Carpet / laminated floors	•		
<b>External repairs</b>			
Green houses	•		
CCTV		•	P2
Blocked or leaking drains / sewage		•	P2
Cloth lines or rotary dryers	•		
Strom damage		•	P2
Water penetration		•	P2
Repairs to roofs / gutters/ rain pipes		•	P3
Blocked flue		•	P2
Fences and gates		•	P3
Insecure windows		•	P1
Gardens	•		
Porch / canopy repairs		•	P3
Glazing [if crime number supplied]		•	P2
Walls and masonry repairs		•	P3
Meter doors		•	P3
Failed double glazing seals		•	P3
Manhole cover		• Or provider	P3
Unsafe access paths		•	P2
<b>Gas and Heating</b>			
Total heating failure		•	P2
Part heating failure		•	P3
Gas servicing		•	Annual programme
Make safe		•	P1
Boilers		•	P1/2
<b>General</b>			
Lifts		•	P2
Door entry		•	P2
Fire alarms / emergency lighting		•	P2
Laundry in schemes		•	P3
Tenant improvements	•		


V10 – 11/4/12