

Responsive Repairs Policy

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1. Policy Objectives

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Deliver a first-class repairs service to customers in line with our 2020-25 Customer Promises
- Provide clear guidance to staff, communicating repairs work in a clear and consistent way

This Policy supports our Asset Management Strategy in ensuring our housing stock is modern and well-maintained under a proactive approach by:

- Complying with relevant legislation in providing customers with a safe, secure, well-maintained home (i.e. one which is warm and weather tight)
- Giving clear advice and guidance on landlord and customer responsibilities, linked to our Service Standards
- Fully engaging and communicating with customers in respect of repairs work and our general approach
- Putting customers at the heart of the service
- Providing regular feedback to the Executive Management Team (EMT), Group Board and the Gateway Membership Team (GMT) around how customers view the service and how we propose to make improvements back to customers
- Making a significant contribution to WCH's objectives of achieving value for money and delivering excellent customer service
- Offering a first-class repairs service in the top quartile for customer satisfaction
- Offering a proactive repairs service

2. Legislative & Regulatory Requirements

2.1 Regulatory

Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), Housing Health and Safety Ratings Systems (HHSRS)

WCH will adhere to the RSH and HHSRS - Details of these can be found through this link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards>

2.2 Legislative

Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (section 11)

2.3 Contractual

WCH Obligations

WCH's repairing obligations in relation to our different groups of customers are summarised at Appendix 1.

Customers' Obligations

Under our standard form General Needs and Market Rent Tenancy Agreements WCH Customers are required to:

- i. Keep the interior of their property in good, clean condition (decorating as necessary) and carrying out any minor repairs (e.g. replacing floor coverings, toilet seats, plugs, broken glass, door handles, fixings, locks, letterboxes, hooks, rails, panelling & smoke alarm batteries, fencing/gates, replacement of internal doors. For further detail, refer to Appendix 1)
- ii. Keep gardens and communal areas well kept, clean and tidy and not cause any pipe or drain blockages
- iii. Allow Watford Community Housing (WCH) access (upon reasonable notice) to make repairs / improvements and carry out health and safety (e.g. gas safety, EICR (electrical safety) checks and work
- iv. Report any disrepair or defect to us promptly

3. Scope & Definitions

3.1 Scope

This Policy applies to general needs (i.e. on social or affordable rent), market rent, leaseholders and shared owners. These groups are referred to commonly throughout this Policy as “customers” unless the context requires otherwise.

This Policy applies to the WCH Group, including its subsidiary and joint venture companies and must be followed by all WCH Group staff who deal with customers' repair requests but will be of particular relevance to the Customer Service Centre.

3.2 Definitions

First Time Fix: where a contractor or the Gateway Repairs Team (GRT) attend the property with the correct part and completes the repair on the first visit or on the same day.

Van Stock: A range of routinely used materials/consumables stored on our vans for the operative's convenience, promoting first time fix and reducing travel time.

Emergency Repairs: repairs which are dangerous or pose an immediate risk to health and/or safety. Emergency repairs must be completed within 24 hours of being attended by a member of the repairs team, unless exceptional circumstances prevent this.

Routine repairs: where the repairs required which do not pose an immediate threat to customers, the property, and/or possessions.

Vulnerable Customer: a customer requiring additional support or protection due to, but not limited to, age, disability or risk of abuse or neglect. For further information, see our Vulnerable Customers Policy.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

Assistant Director of Property Services: is responsible for the strategic planning and direction of maintenance services. They are accountable for all operational functions ensuring delivery of services in line with the organisation's corporate values and objectives.

Repairs Manager: is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Responsive Repairs service, managing performance and monitoring KPI's to ensure corporate targets are achieved.

GRT Team Leaders: are responsible for managing contractors and GRT operatives. Undertaking 10% post inspections when repairs are completed.

GRT Operatives: are responsible for carrying out repair works appointed via the resource scheduling system, within the agreed time scales and service standards. They will also report and appoint follow on works if required.

Customer Service Centre: is responsible for receiving, diagnosing and raising all repair requests received from customers through a variety of ways as detailed in section 5.

Customer Relations Team: are responsible for managing all complaints and satisfaction data in relation to repairs, follow on works and correspondence.

Resource planners: are responsible for ensuring all appointments scheduled are allocated and attended to within the agreed time scales. Any follow-on works are planned with customers being informed while the operative is on site.

5. First Class Repair Service

In line with our 2020-25 Customer Promise, when a repair is needed it is our best endeavour to provide a first-class customer experience. Booking a repair should be easy and can be done at any time. We will offer a range of appointments at times which work for our customers. We will arrive on time and fix the problem on the first visit on at least nine out of ten occasions.

5.1 Reporting Repairs

Self-Appointing Repairs using Digital Tenancy Service (DTS)

Customers can raise a request for a routine repair when they are registered with our online digital tenancy service. Customers have the ability to select or amend an appointment date for any repair's appointment.

Reporting Repairs via E-mail

Customers can report any repair using WCH online enquiry service at www.wcht.org.uk, or e-mail directly to our Customer Service Centre at enquires@wcht.org.uk.

Smart Tracking GRT Operatives

Customers will have access to track operatives while they are on-route to their appointment and send information to assist the GRT operative with access to the repair. Customers can track the identified operative along with a map with the planned journey and progress including traffic updates. Text messages will be sent when the operative has accepted the order, is on-route and arrived on site.

Reporting by Phone

We aim to deal with any repair request within one phone call in a polite and professional manner. Customers can contact our Customer Service Centre on 0800 218 2247 (Freephone) between the hours of 08:30am - 5:30pm Monday to Friday. We'll call customers back who are calling from their mobile phone if asked. We aim to provide a "live" appointment on the first call but, if we can't, we will explain why and agree when we will come back to the customer with more information.

We will communicate regularly with the customer throughout the progress of the repair to include any follow-on visits, which will be booked with the customer by the Operative allocated to the job. Text reminders will be sent to the customer the day before the appointment to confirm it.

We will respond to these reports as follows under our Service Standards:

Service Request	Initial Response Time
In person	24 hrs (excluding weekends)
By telephone	24 hrs (excluding weekends)
By email	24 hrs (excluding weekends)
Via DTS	24 hrs (excluding weekends)
By letter	5 working days

Reporting Emergencies Out of Hours

Our out of hours service will undertake emergency repairs outside of normal working hours. Where required, the operative(s)/ contractor will attend site to ensure the property is made safe, with the endeavour to complete a repair where possible. The out of hours service operates through the week between the hours of 17:00 – 08:00 and during the weekend and Bank Holidays.

5.2 First Time Fix

We aim to complete at least 80% of repairs as a "First Time Fix" in accordance with our Service Standards. This will increase to 90% by 2025.

Where this is not possible, the operative onsite will offer another appointment or alternatively GRT resource planners will contact the customer within 3 working days and arrange a convenient date. For more complex repairs a WCH Surveyor/Team Leader may be required to visit the home.

6. Repairs Priorities

We will prioritise repairs according to their urgency and the customers' particular needs or vulnerabilities.

Our aim is to complete repairs within 20 working days of the repair's initial report. To ensure this we will:

- Provide a 24hr, 7 day a week service to report emergencies
- Attend and complete repairs in accordance with our Service Standards
- Offer a choice of appointment times (08:00 to 12:00am and 12:00-17:30pm Monday – Friday)
- Be flexible around school runs, working hours and caring responsibilities

Examples: see Appendix 2. Further detail can be found in our Vulnerable Customers Policy.

We will ensure that staff are sufficiently trained in diagnosing and prioritising repairs. Dealing with health and safety concerns will always be of paramount importance. Further guidance on dealing with individual repair jobs is outlined in our Repairs Process (end to end) Handbook which can be found on our website: <https://www.wcht.org.uk/your-home/handbooks,-guides-policies/>

6.1 General Needs, Market Rent, Independent Living& Flexicare Schemes

- Emergency Works - attend within 4 hours, make safe and implement a repair within 24 hours
- Appointable repair - available repair slot for non-emergency repairs

6.2 Hostels & Temporary Accommodation

- Emergency Works - attend within 4 hours, make safe and implement a repair within 24 hours
- Urgent - a maximum of 7 calendar days
- Routine - a maximum of 20 calendar days

The repair priorities and what constitutes an emergency, urgent or routine repair are described in more detailed at Appendix 2.

6.3 Communal Maintenance

Our Estates and Property Services teams will monitor and post-inspect communal areas where repairs have been undertaken, to ensure they have been completed to a satisfactory standard and are in accordance with health and safety standards and regulations.

6.4 Tenant Alterations or Home Improvements

WCH will allow certain alterations and improvements to be undertaken by customers themselves. Further guidance is set out in the Alterations Policy and Procedure.

7. Inspections

7.1 Pre-Inspection

A pre-inspection where required will be undertaken by a Team Leader or (where repairs are significant/cannot be diagnosed over the 'phone) by a sub-contractor or Surveyor. Pre-inspections will generally be required where there is/are:

- Complex repairs requiring more than one operative and/or multiple days to complete
- Ongoing damp and condensation
- Structural defects (requiring an insurance claim)
- Roofing repairs
- Significant disrepair

7.2 Post-Inspection

Post inspections are required to ensure that the relevant operative has carried out the repair(s) to the required standard while providing value for money and maintaining an accurate property repair history.

Post-inspections identified for inspection will be carried out by a Team Leaders and recorded on the housing management system.

7.3 End of Tenancy Visits

The area Housing Officer will carry out a pre void inspection of the property and provide a Schedule of works to customers prior to ending their Tenancy. This is a list of required repairs and estimated costs which the customer is obligated to remedy in accordance with the Tenancy Agreement before returning the keys. When lease arrangements are set up with external organisations such as Watford Borough Council (WBC), a Condition Schedule will be produced and agreed with the other party, to assist with the end of lease negotiations.

8. Product Standardisation/Van Stock

WCH will, over a period of years, seek to standardise parts which are replaced when responsive repairs are undertaken. The purpose is two-fold; to assist with "First Time Fix" and to provide replacement parts which require less maintenance thus providing value for money and a longer life cycle. The list of approved manufacturers is at Appendix 3.

We will operate an 'Van Stock' linking to our repairs ICT systems. We will proactively manage and control our stock to ensure through our supply chain that we have parts and materials available to deliver a high rate of first-time fixes along with increased contract support from manufacturers.

9. Health & Safety

Ensuring the safety of all works carried out by our staff or contractors is of paramount importance to us. We undertake regular site audits in conjunction with the Health & Safety Manager to ensure staff and contractors have adopted and implemented safe working practices through our management systems. This includes either reviewing; method statements, risk assessments or checks to ensure our own staff are following correct protocols. We will randomly select sites where works are in progress in communal areas or within individual dwellings.

WCH has an obligation to deal with improvement notices served under the Housing Health and Safety Ratings Systems (HHSRS) administered by local authorities. Where notices are served, the Repairs Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the matter is brought to a satisfactory conclusion within the statutory timescales. These will be reported to the Assistant Director of Property Services.

Please see our Occupational Health and Safety Management Framework for further information.

10. Lack of Access

Where lack of access is reported by any repairs operative this will be referred to the Resource Planning team and the job will be marked as "No Access" and the job will be cancelled (Gas Servicing, three visits prior to legal action). A photograph of the door and tracker report will be provided as evidence of attendance, if required, along with a No Access card. The Resource Planners will then liaise with the Housing Operations team to establish whether further action is required, which may include a Tenancy Audit Visit or Legal Action.

No access by the customer will result in a charge being levied in line with the Recharges Policy and Procedure. This will be recorded in the Housing management System. If the works are of an emergency nature, we will continue to try to make contact with the customer to gain access, forced entry in these circumstances maybe required.

11. Insurance

Customers are responsible under their Tenancy Agreement for ensuring they have sufficient home insurance cover for their contents and personal belongings. WCH offers low-cost home contents insurance through a 3rd party provider, which customers should be routinely encouraged to take up.

All WCH buildings are insured against damage. Where damage occurs to the building which is covered by our Insurance Policy, we will pursue a claim as appropriate. We will deal with insurance claims as swiftly as possible however it is recognised that remedial action with regards to structural defects can take a significant amount of time to resolve.

If it is found that damage has occurred due to negligence of a GRT operative, we will claim under WCH's relevant insurance policies. We will also track and monitor deliberate damage or non-recoverable insurance claims.

For further information please see the Insurance Policy and Procedure.

12. Asset Investment Model

WCH seeks to reduce the volume of responsive repairs through ongoing, effective planned maintenance, and investment in, our housing stock. Information collected during our regular stock condition surveys on the condition of our properties is collated with information on the number and frequency of repairs to help priorities planned works programmes. The planning and timing of programmes is designed to ensure elements such as kitchens and bathrooms are renewed within their expected lifespan, reducing the need for responsive repairs. We will also identify properties where the cost of maintenance outweighs its financial and social value, flagging the asset for potential disposal.

We will analyse and benchmark our data to identify any trends relating to our properties in conjunction with:

- High-cost properties
- High frequency of repairs
- Average cost of repairs per property
- Trade analysis
- Time priority allocation
- Spend profile
- Resource Allocation
- Material Usage

This data will be cross-referenced with our stock condition data to examine any correlation with planned investment required. Neighbouring properties will also be examined from a responsive repairs basis to ascertain whether the property requires investment, or the behaviour of the customer needs to be reviewed via a tenancy audit.

Our Customer Relations Team will also monitor and report weekly and monthly performance for customer repairs and maintenance satisfaction. We will continue to investigate and resolve reasons for dissatisfaction.

All customers will receive an electronic satisfaction survey upon their repair being completed. We are committed to being transparent with our customers about our satisfaction levels and clear around what we are doing to improve performance. We routinely benchmark our service offer and customer satisfaction against comparable organisations within our sector as well as the private sector to improve our service.

13. New Build Repairs

Customers can report repairs required to new build properties in the normal ways, outlined at section 5. Repairs reported during the first year of the development's completion ("the Rectification Period") will be passed to the relevant development contractor to remedy. The repair will be recorded on our housing management system and their volume and outcome monitored by our Partnerships team.

After the Rectification Period:

- Latent defects will be managed through the relevant guarantees by the Property Services team. Customers will be advised of the probable timescales relevant to the defect
- All other repairs will be completed as Routine or Emergency Repairs as normal under this Policy

14. Diversity & Inclusion

WCH is committed to ensuring equal access to all of the Group's services in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and our duties under the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. These require registered providers to:

- Remove barriers in accordance with our obligations as a service provider under the Equality Act 2010
- Meet the individual needs of our customers in accordance with the regulatory Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (para 2.1), for instance those who are vulnerable or living in our Independent Living or Flexicare schemes

15. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Repairs Obligation Matrix
- Appendix 2 - Repair Priorities
- Appendix 3 - Product Standardisation List

16. Related Documents

- WCH Service Standards
- Asset Management Strategy
- Disrepair Policy
- Repairs Process (end to end) Handbook
- Alterations Policy & Procedure
- Occupational Health and Safety Management Framework
- Insurance Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Vulnerable Customers Policy
- Recharges Policy & Procedure