

## Tenant Handbook

# Repairs, maintenance and improving your home



City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**

We aim to provide a home which is kept in repair and proper working order with repairs done within the timescales set. Some repairs are our responsibility to carry out as the landlord and some are your responsibility as the tenant.

### What the council is responsible for

- The structure of your home, including the floors, walls, stairs, roof, windows, drains and gutters
- Any communal areas in apartment blocks such as staircases, landings and corridors
- Installations for supplying electricity, gas, hot and cold water, room heating and sanitation
- Providing kitchen units for basic food storage and preparation, and bathroom fittings.

### What you are responsible for

You are responsible for repairing, renewing or replacing the following items:

- Lock changes to door and windows (unless you supply us with a crime reference number from the police)
- Window and door glass breakages (unless you supply us with a crime reference number from the police)
- Plugs and chains to sinks, wash basins and baths
- Toilet seats
- Door chains
- Curtain and picture rails
- Gate and shed locks, latches, bolts and catches
- Electrical fuses
- Blockages to waste pipes, WC pans or drains (due to misuse)
- TV aerials (that are not shared)

You are also required to contact us when repair work is needed to your property or to a communal area and are responsible for repairing and replacing items which you have installed yourself, such as a kitchen or bathroom fittings.

### How to report a repair

**If you need to request a repair to your home or to your building you can contact the repairs service on 01782 234100.**

You can also report a repair by a range of other ways:

- or email: [housing.repairs@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:housing.repairs@stoke.gov.uk)
- Online at [www.stoke.gov.uk/housingrepair](http://www.stoke.gov.uk/housingrepair)
- In person at your nearest local centre
- By using the Freephones at your nearest local centre
- Or In writing to: Uitas Stoke Ltd, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Alton House, Cromer Road, Northwood, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 6AY

For estimated timescales of your repair work, visit our website ([stoke.gov.uk](http://stoke.gov.uk)) or call our repairs service.

### Charging for repairs

If a repair is needed due to damage or neglect by you, a member of your household or a visitor, then you may be charged for the work.

If the repair needed is due to crime or vandalism you will need to report the incident to the police and get a crime reference number before reporting the repair to us. You will then not be charged for the repair.

### Access for repairs

When we undertake maintenance or repair works to your property we try to do so at a time convenient to you. In cases of emergency, for example in the event of a flood, it may not be possible to provide you with reasonable notice.

If you agree an appointment that you are unable to keep, you must tell us as soon as possible and re-arrange it. If you do not keep the appointment, cover the costs of the tradesperson/ tradesperson's attendance.



## Health and safety

We recommend you familiarise yourself with the location of the gas meter and tap, cold water stop cock, electricity meter and fuse board in the event of an emergency. Smoke detectors are fitted to all our homes and are checked annually by us. However it is your responsibility to check regularly to make sure that the alarm battery is working. You must let us know if they are not working.

In the event of a fire, it could save your life. If you're not sure how to check the battery, contact your local centre. They will make arrangements to show you how.

If you have problems hearing or seeing we have special smoke detectors.

## Gas safety

**If you smell gas you should turn off all gas appliances, open all doors and windows and call the Gas Emergency number 0800 111 999.**

**Do not switch on lights, light matches or cigarettes.**

We check our gas appliances and pipework annually and will be in contact with you to arrange an appointment to do this. We do this to meet Gas Safety Regulations and to ensure your safety. If you cannot be home for your appointment please let us know so we can arrange an alternative one.

Every year, for health and safety reasons, the Gas Section carry out gas safety checks, this is a legal requirement for all landlords. Even if there is only a gas supply with a capped emergency control valve in or outside the property we will still need to complete an annual gas safety check. We are only responsible for inspecting and maintaining gas fires and gas boilers that have been installed by us or our appointed contractors. You are responsible for servicing and maintaining privately owned appliances. If you install your own appliance (for which you need to apply for permission), we will need to check the integrity of the chimney which will require removal of your appliance, this will then be safety checked before reconnecting. We will not service your appliance – this is your responsibility.

It is a condition of your tenancy agreement that you allow access so that these checks can take place. The checks are important to prevent the risk to you, your family and your neighbours suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning through a gas appliance, flue or ventilation system not working properly.

If you prevent access for us to perform these gas safety checks we can take legal action and obtain permission from a court to enter the property. You will be charged £250 to recover the additional costs. It is also a condition of your tenancy that you do not tamper with gas supplies, meters or appliances as this is illegal and also extremely dangerous to you, your family and neighbours.



## Electrical safety

We will test the electrical installation in your property every 5 years depending upon the age and type of the installation. This testing will only cover the main installation of the property. You are responsible for ensuring privately owned appliances are serviced and maintained.

If you think there is a safety problem with your meter, the cables or other equipment leading to your home, telephone your supplier's emergency number. It will be listed on your bill under "Supply Failure". You can find details of your supplier by ringing Western Power Distribution on **0800 6783 105**.

It is a condition of your tenancy agreement that you allow access for electrical safety checks to take place and that you do not tamper with electricity supplies or meters as this is illegal and also extremely dangerous to you, your family and neighbours.

If you prevent access for us to perform these electrical safety checks we can take legal action and obtain permission from a court to enter the property. You will be charged £250 to recover the additional costs.



## Water safety

As a Landlord, we need to ensure you are aware of the possible causes of Legionnaires disease, so you can easily identify any problems and seek medical advice if necessary.

Legionnaires disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia, which can affect anyone. It is usually caused by the inhalation of small droplets of water from contaminated sources containing legionella bacteria.

All hot and cold water systems in residential properties are a potential source of legionella bacteria growth. The main areas of risk are where the bacteria can multiply and increase to dangerous levels and then spread, for example, in spray from showers and taps, and even in dishwasher and washing machine pipes.

Taking the following precautions will help to keep you safe:

- **Flush through showers and taps for 10 minutes following a period of non-use (say if you've been on holiday or if a room is not in regular use).**
- **Keep all shower heads and taps clean and free from a build-up of scale, mould or algae growth (regular bleaching every three months will help sterilise and kill any bacteria).**
- **Keep the hot water on your boiler system at a temperature of 60 degrees centigrade or higher. Note – raising the temperature of warm water is one way to control legionella growth, but could also increase the risk of scalding. Please take care especially if you have children.**
- **Report any deposits such as rust or any unusual matter flowing from your water outlets.**
- **Flush toilets with the lid down following a period of non-use.**
- **Drain hosepipes after use and keep out of direct sunlight. Flush through for a couple of minutes before filling paddling pools etc.**

## Fire

You should make sure you are familiar with the layout of your home or apartment block. Ensure you know where fire exits are and your quickest route to them. Some apartment blocks are designed for you to stay put during a fire – signage in the blocks will clearly tell you if this is the case.

If there is a fire in your home you should do the following:

- Get everyone out leaving by the quickest exit
- Close all windows and doors where possible
- Telephone the emergency services after you have left the building
- Alert your neighbours where possible

- In some apartment blocks you are required to immediately evacuate in the event of a fire. Other blocks are designed to use a 'stay-put' policy, meaning if the fire is not in your home, please close all doors and windows and remain in your apartment. At the start of your tenancy you will be informed of the fire evacuation policy that applies to your home. There is signage in each apartment block clarifying which policy applies.

The emergency services will evacuate you if necessary.

**Always follow instructions given by the fire service during an incident.**

## Tips on preventing fire in the home

- Do not smoke in bed
- Do not place flammable materials or furniture too close to fires or other ignition sources
- Regularly test smoke alarms
- Do not cook late at night or if you are tired
- It would be useful to get yourself a fire blanket to keep close to hand – if you do, make yourself familiar with the instructions
- Avoid using chip pans where possible
- Internal doors are there for your protection in the event of a fire. Please do not remove or adjust them
- Keep curtains away from heat sources
- Remember not to block any fire exits with furniture or other items in your home.





## Fencing

Wherever possible the council will repair or make safe any fencing for which it has installed, but if the fencing cannot be repaired or made safe it may be removed or replaced.

Any decision to provide new or replacement fencing will be based on issues around:

- Health and safety
- Privacy.
- Amenity.

The council is not responsible for repairing or replacing shared fencing/walls where this has been undertaken as a Tenant Improvement by the current tenant. The replacement of fencing which is beyond repair will be included in programmes of planned works to council homes and estates going forward

Where the fencing provides a boundary division onto open land or the highway, this boundary is the owner occupier's sole responsibility, as indicated within the deeds of the property.

If you need specific advice about fencing at your property contact your Local Centre.

## Improvements to your home

### Getting permission to make alterations or improvements to your council home

Prior to carrying out any structural alterations or improvements to your property, you should check with staff at the Local Centre to see if you require our permission or further guidance.

If you need our permission your local centre will arrange for someone to review your proposals and either agree, refuse or request further information. Once approval has been granted you will receive an approval letter confirming such.

Please remember that certain works may require Planning & Building Regulations approval prior to works being approved.

Only use suitably qualified engineers for gas or electrical work you have permission to complete and ensure you obtain documentation to prove the work has been completed to the relevant standards.

## Getting compensated for the improvements you make

If you leave your home by ending your tenancy you may be entitled to receive some compensation for specific improvement work which you have carried out at your own cost.

The types of improvements which could qualify for compensation include:

- Kitchen or bathroom fittings
- Heating systems
- Insulation improvements
- Draught proofing
- Double glazing
- Security measures

The amount of compensation depends on the value of the work completed and the age of the improvements. It is advisable that you keep all of the receipts for improvement work that you carry out. This will help us to process your compensation easily.

If you think this applies to you, inform the local centre at the time you end your tenancy that you want to claim "Compensation for Improvements".

