



Gravesend Churches Housing Association

Maintenance Policy

Status:	Approved by Board
Approval Route:	Board
Responsible Officer:	Steve Fox, Operations Director
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Signed off by:	Name: Steve Harriott Date: 20 th May 2020

1. Our Intentions

GCHA is committed to maintaining all its properties to a high standard, ensuring the accommodation reflects positively on both the tenants and the association. GCHA aims to:

- meet all its statutory and contractual obligations;
- provide a responsive and effective service to tenants, obtaining regular feedback from tenants on both the association and contractors performance;
- promote with contractors a 'get it right first time' approach;
- provide appointments for all work;
- ensure that repairs and maintenance are of a high standard and represent good value for money;
- ensure that no person receives less favourable service on the grounds of race, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, marital status or age;
- monitor performance to achieve continuous improvement.

All maintenance is provided under contract and performance is reported to the board at least annually, on contractor performance, tenant satisfaction and budget spend.

The Recharge Policy applies to this Policy.

2. Responsibility for Repairs

The association's tenancy agreements and tenants' handbook detail who is responsible for which repairs. We regularly produce articles detailing our maintenance service in the tenants' newsletter.

Broadly speaking GCHA is responsible for the structure and exterior of the building, the installations provided by the association for space heating, water heating and sanitation and for the supply of water, gas and electricity.

3. Requesting a Repair

Tenants have an obligation set out in their agreements to notify the association of any repairs needed and to provide necessary access. In the event of an emergency repair being reported, the association will exercise their rights as per the individual tenancy agreements in order to gain access.

Maintenance requests can be telephoned to the association's office during office hours – 8.00am to 17.00pm weekdays or non-emergency repairs may be left on an answer phone out of normal hours. Tenants may also report repairs by e-mail, letter or in person. Repairs are also identified by association staff during routine calls to properties and estate and health and safety inspections.

Where tenants find the above reporting methods difficult, we will arrange a visit to assess the repair request

Repair requests are analysed by GCHA staff who will inform the tenant what will happen next. This could be a number of options:

- an inspection by a GCHA representative;
- confirmation that the request has been agreed; or
- to advise the tenant that the repair request is their responsibility

Tenants are informed of the procedure for emergency repairs needed at weekends, holidays or out of normal working hours. Call out emergency numbers is maintained and held by Centra (out of hours service provider), the Operations Director and at the association's office. We will ensure our out of hours service provider is made fully aware of the

association's policies with regards to repairs. Further details around the out-of-hours procedure is detailed in section 7.0 of this document. For clarity, emergency repairs are detailed in section 4.2 of this policy.

Void (empty) property works

All void properties are thoroughly checked before re-letting and any works put into action in line with our void standard. Decorating vouchers may be used to enable tenants to decorate to their own taste, however many properties will be fully decorated prior to occupation.

As a minimum, GCHA will complete H&S checks to void properties, including:

- Completing a gas safety inspection
- Completing an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR)
- Ensuring the property contains working smoke alarms
- Ensuring the property contains a working CO alarm

Please see Appendix A for more information on Void Standards.

Insurance Claims

Where criminal damage has taken place tenants must report the matter to the police within 24 hours of its discovery. The crime number will be used and an insurance claim may be made where appropriate to recoup the cost of the work. Tenants are responsible for insuring the contents of their homes and the association will not be held liable for any repairs due to accidental damage

Missed Appointments

Where a tenant advises us that a contractor has failed to meet the appointment, this will be communicated with the contractor and monitored on an ongoing basis, triggering KPI penalties if appropriate.

4. Response Time

Depending upon the nature of the maintenance problem the contractor may visit to assess the nature or the extent of the works before a works order raised with the contractor may be necessary.

Priority is given depending on the nature of the repair and/or the vulnerability of the tenant.

All contractors are expected to arrange, and keep, appointments for all repairs. Appointments will be made at a mutually agreeable time and date either morning or afternoon and for non-emergency work the contractor has up to 42 days to complete the work from the date of the work order.

Emergency works should be completed within 24 hours.

Emergency repairs only include work that is required to prevent danger to life and limb or may cause a serious health & safety hazard or extensive damage to property.

Examples are:

- total loss of electrical power where fault is the responsibility of GCHA;
- blocked or leaking foul drain or soil stack;
- cracked, broken/leaking toilet where there is no other working toilet in the dwelling house;

- gas leak; and
- significant leak from water or heating pipe, tank or cistern.

GCHA will take into consideration the nature of the repair and the vulnerability of tenants when deciding whether or not a repair should be carried out within 24 hours.

5. Cyclical Painting, Works to ensure Health and Safety of Tenants, Staff Contractors, and Aids and Adaptations

Cyclical painting

The external painting of all properties including any common parts, corridors, and access ways or similar is due to be carried out every 7 years. However, after inspection this may be re-assessed if the condition of decoration dictates. During the year prior to external painting being due, all properties are inspected by maintenance staff and repairs to timberwork, window frames, doors etc, are undertaken to enable subsequent painting to be carried out with minimum repair work. If we have to paint external doors we will give tenants a choice of colour.

Statutory works to ensure H&S compliance

GCHA work hard to ensure that all statutory regulations in relation to Health and Safety are adhered to. The GCHA Health and Safety Policy (March 2018) provides further details about the works included.

The works in question are:

- Gas Safety Inspections - In order to meet our statutory obligations and ensure tenants safety, all gas appliances are serviced within a 12-month period. We will take legal action against any tenant that refuses access. An additional gas safety test is carried out on each property as it becomes empty.
- Electrical Inspections - These are carried out on a 5-year cycle with some properties more frequently if deemed necessary. Electrical Inspections will also be completed on change of tenancy.
- Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM's) - GCHA hold a record of Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM's) on it's sites. These records are made available to any contractors visiting the site and also to the tenants in question. Where asbestos is required to be disturbed to undertake a repair, specialist contractors are commissioned.
- Fire Safety Testing/Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) - Where fire safety equipment is installed in properties, GCHA maintain these and ensure they are tested as dictated by British Standards. FRA's are completed to all properties where there are enclosed communal areas. Any recommendations from these FRA's and completed in line with the individual FRA actions timescales. In addition to the above, GCHA also complete checks to all estates on a rolling basis, testing fire alarms weekly, emergency lights monthly, communal fire doors 3 monthly and AOV's (automatic opening vents) 3 monthly. All shared common areas are checked regularly to ensure that escape routes are kept clear.
- Legionella Testing - All properties where stored water tanks are in situ are subject to regular legionella testing. This work is completed as part of a service contract in accordance with current regulations. Water risk assessments (WRA's) are completed on a regular basis in line with best practice, with actions completed within the target timeframes given. Advice is given to residents where this is relevant (generally HMO accommodation) in line with the recommendations from the WRA's.

- Passenger Lifts - Where passenger lifts are present, GCHA ensure that maintenance contracts are in place to ensure they are maintained and are in good working order. GCHA insurers check the operation of lifting equipment as per the current requirements.

Aids and Adaptations

GCHA will arrange to complete minor, low cost adaptation works (for example, fitting hand/grab rails or creating low level steps) when requested by a qualified Occupational Therapist (OT).

Larger scale adaptations are funded directly to the tenant via a Disabled Facilities Grant. Where these are required, the OT will submit detailed plans of the works that are intended. These will be dealt with on a case by case basis, with the final decision being made by the Operations Director. The works are then completed by approved KCC contractors.

6. Emergency Out-of-Hours Maintenance Requests

Tenants are able to report out-of-hours emergencies to the out-of-hours call centre, managed by Centra. The contact details are available on the GCHA answerphone and are provided to tenants by newsletters and the information is also contained within the tenants sign up pack.

When a call is made, Centra refer to the out-of-hours manual (provided and continually updated by GCHA) for details of how to deal with each situation. Should further clarification be required, they will phone through to the Duty Officer (there is currently a rota issued detailing which staff members are on call).

If a contractor is required to attend site, Centra will make the necessary arrangements with the GCHA emergency out-of-hours works contractor. This is a 'make safe' arrangement.

Following the completion of the works GCHA are able to view the details of each callout and arrange further works (if required) through the appropriate reactive maintenance contractor.

7. Use of Contractors

Staff are not allowed to use GCHA approved contractors for private work.

8. Monitoring Performance

Performance is monitored on a regular basis via in-house staff and external consultants as required. This may include desktop studies to ensure VFM or site visits to ensure the quality of works.

Residents are also engaged to complete customer satisfaction surveys for completed works via telephone surveys on a rolling basis (for individual works) and via annual survey sent to all residents.

Appendix A

GCHA are proud of the condition of its properties and as such they are let to a high standard.

GCHA will complete the following works to all empty properties prior to reletting:

SAFETY

Gas installation

Before any new let (and where applicable) a gas safety inspection (LGSR) will be undertaken and a copy of the certificate will be provided to the incoming resident. The certificate will indicate that the gas installation within the home is safe. A new CO alarm (meeting the necessary British Standards) will be placed in a location as per the manufacturers recommendations.

Electrical installation

Before any new let an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) will be undertaken and any C1 or C2 recommendations will be resolved prior to letting. A copy of the EICR will be provided to the incoming resident.

Fire

All fire doors will be free from defects and fit for purpose. Working smoke alarms will be provided on each level of the property (generally in the hallway on the ground floor and at the top of the stairs if the property is on two levels).

Asbestos

Before any new let the asbestos register is referred to, and if necessary a visual inspection of any asbestos containing materials is completed. Should any defects be identified, these will be referred to a specialist contractor qualified to work with asbestos for remediation. Incoming residents will be advised on exactly where asbestos is located in their home and advice will be given around asbestos.

Security

New locks will be fitted to all external doors and the ingoing residents will be provided with 3 sets of keys for each.

Any lockable windows will be in good condition and GCHA will supply keys for these to the ingoing residents.

All windows and doors, both internal and external, will open, close and be sound and weather tight.

External areas

Where there is a private garden it will be tidy and free from rubbish. Pathways will be free from trip hazards. All fences will be a minimum of 1m high and in good condition.

Television aerials in houses are the responsibility of resident. Within flats, a communal aerial system will be provided and GCHA will be responsible for its upkeep.

Gutters and downpipes will be clear and free from any defects that affect their operation.

Structure

The structure of the property will be sound and the property will be free from damp and mould. The roof will be weathertight.

INTERNALLY

Cleanliness

The property will be thoroughly cleaned before a new resident moves in and the sanitary and kitchen fittings will be clean and disinfected. Windows, internal glazing and floors will be cleaned.

Any personal items left in the property will be disposed of, and this includes any items left within the loft space.

Decorations

Where the property requires decorating the walls and ceilings will be painted in neutral colours. All woodwork will be painted with white gloss paint.

Where a property only requires some upgrading on decorating and the incoming resident is willing and able to decorate the property themselves, decorating vouchers will be given towards the cost of the materials. The value of these vouchers will be decided by the Housing Officer.

Kitchens

All kitchen drawers and cupboards will open and close properly. Work surfaces will be free from cracks and chips. Tiles will be sound and free of cracks/damage.

Where a kitchen is due for replacement within 3-5 years, total replacement may be requested by the Housing Officer. The Maintenance and Compliance Manager or Housing Services Manager will be responsible for authorising this work. Generally, the age of the kitchen will not exceed 20 years.

Bathrooms

Showers will be fitted over the bath where this is possible. Some properties may have specifically adapted bathrooms/showers. A shower curtain rail will be fitted.

All tiles will be properly sealed and be free of any chips or cracks.

Where a bathroom is due for replacement within 3-5 years, total replacement of the suite may be requested by the Housing Officer. The Maintenance and Compliance Manager or Housing Services Manager will be responsible for authorising this work. Generally, the age of the bathroom will not exceed 30 years.

Floors

Where carpet has been left in a property, it will be removed from the property. This is to protect the property from any potential pest infestations.

New flooring will be provided throughout the property and will consist of:

Lounge, reception rooms, hallways and bedrooms – carpeting will be provided to these areas.

Kitchen and bathroom – non-slip flooring will be provided in these areas.

Energy Efficiency

GCHA strive to provide homes that are energy efficient to help to alleviate potential fuel poverty.

Where required a new energy performance (EPC) certificate will be completed by an

approved EPC surveyor. The results of these will be studied and any practical recommendations identified will be put in place. This could include increasing the level of loft insulation, working to fill cavity walls or upgrading the heating system and controls.

The vast majority of GCHA homes have highly efficient condensing combination boilers already in place (SEDBUK band 'A').

APPROVED POLICY