

Maintenance and Empty Homes Policy

October 2024

Owner: Maintenance Operations Manager

Version No.	Purpose/Changes	Approval Date	Approved By	Suggested Review Date
9.0	Update following internal audit	10/10/2024	HoST	March 2027
8.0	Health check	14/03/2024	HoST	March 2027
7.0	Health check	08/09/2022	CV	September 2025
6.0	Health check	06/12/2018	HoST	December 2021
5.0	Health check	05/11/2015	HoST	November 2018
4.0	Health check	05/11/2014	HoST	October 2017
3.0	Health check	22/01/2014	Heads of Service Team (HoST)	January 2016
2.0	Full review	23/01/2013	NLH Board	October 2013
1.0	New policy	15/12/2010	NLH Board	December 2012

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1. Our Policy...

- 1.1 In fulfilling our role as a registered provider of social housing (RP) regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing, we must provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choice to, tenants and customers.
- 1.2 Meeting our tenants' and customers' expectations of a high standard of service delivery is essential. We are committed to ensuring our homes are well maintained and safe places where our tenants and customers can be proud to live.
- 1.3 Delivering a clean safe and secure property to incoming customers, within our targets for empty home turnaround times
- 1.4 It is our responsibility to protect the value of our housing stock to ensure service standard requirements are met and that all our homes meet **at least** the Decent Homes Standard.
- 1.5 The priorities and timescales stated within this policy take effect from the 1st of April 2023.

2. It applies to...

- 2.1 This policy applies to all maintenance work carried out on our housing stock by Ongo Homes (OH) employees or contractors working on our behalf.
- 2.2 This policy does not include Gas Servicing or any compliance related servicing or repairs. Please see our policies relating to gas servicing and inspections and testing.
- 2.3 This policy does not apply to aids and adaptations. Please see our Aids and Adaptations Policy.

3. Because we want to..

- 3.1 The aims of this policy are to:
 - Ensure the repairs and maintenance to the homes of our tenants and customers are carried out and managed effectively and efficiently always considering value for money
 - Ensure our tenants and customers feel and are safe and secure in their homes and neighbourhoods
 - Ensure empty properties are maintained and repaired to the Lettable Standard and our turnaround of empty homes is managed effectively and efficiently always considering value for money
 - Ensure we are compliant with our legislative and regulatory obligations in relation to health and safety and repairs and maintenance

4. We will...

Repairs and Maintenance

- 4.1 Ongo Homes are responsible for providing a repairs and maintenance service for their tenants. Some repairs are tenants' responsibilities and these are detailed in the tenancy / lease agreement.
- 4.2 Appointments will be provided to tenants and customers for the work they are requesting. The repair will be fall into one of these categories – examples of what repairs would fall into these categories are detailed within appendix 1:
- Emergency repair – carried out within 24 hours
 - Urgent repair – carried out within one week (7 calendar days)
 - Routine repair - carried out within either 4 weeks (28 calendar days) or 12 weeks (84 calendar days) depending on the nature of the repair
- 4.3 Repairs will be prioritised accordingly following the agreed response times, detailed in full in appendix 1.
- 4.4 When making an appointment we will always consider vulnerabilities, specific needs and circumstances of our tenants and customers and / or members of their household.
- 4.5 Tenants can report repairs to us via the MyHome App, our website or by phoning us. All appointments will be made in line with the priorities as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 4.6 Our repairs will be carried out by our in-house Maintenance team or external contractors carrying out work on behalf of Ongo Homes. Whoever is carrying out the repairs will ensure they are completed within the timescales detailed in appendix 1.
- 4.7 Where a repair issue falls under a warranty agreement, the appropriate contractor will carry out the repair and will do so within the same timescales detailed in appendix 1.
- 4.8 Our tenants and customers are at the heart of everything we do and we aim to complete repairs during the first visit to the property. If this is not possible, we will explain clearly what the next steps are and when the individual can expect to be contacted with an update. We will continue to keep tenants and customers informed of the progress of their repair until it is complete.
- 4.9 Where repairs are carried out that are a tenant's responsibility, as detailed within tenancy agreements, or they need to be completed due to willful actions or as a result of neglect and cannot be classed as fair wear and tear, we may recharge in line with our Recharge Policy.

Empty Homes

- 4.10 Ongo Homes are responsible for ensuring that their properties meet the Decent Homes and Lettable Standard prior to being let to a new tenant. Any post let repairs required will be completed within 1 month of tenancy commencement (unless an emergency).
- 4.11 We will actively monitor our empty homes process in collaboration with the Lettings team to minimise the period our properties are empty so that they are available for letting to prospective tenants as quickly as possible and measure our performance using a suite of KPI's.

- 4.12 Ongo aim to carry out works to all empty homes and have them re-let to a new tenant within 30 calendar days. This excludes Investment voids where extensive structural works are required or consideration need to be given for an options appraisal.
- 4.13 We will ensure that all empty properties are compliant with Health and Safety legislation, the Decent Homes Standard and Ongo Homes' lettable standard when re-let to a new tenant and strive to achieve the highest levels of customer satisfaction.
- 4.14 Ongo will carry out pre-leaving inspections ahead of the property becoming void to identify works required to ensure the appropriate works are scheduled as soon as practicable.
- 4.15 When tenant damage is identified during these inspections, the outgoing tenant or their representative will be informed of what work is required before the property is handed back to Ongo Homes. Any works not completed once the property is handed back to Ongo will be identified on a Void Inspection Report and the costs for repair will be recharged to the former tenant in line with our Recharge Policy.
- 4.16 Wherever possible, we will have the utilities of empty homes changed to our preferred supplier. All properties will have locks changed and new keys provided.

4.17 **Right to repair**

- 4.17.1 We comply with the Right to Repair provisions (section 21 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban development Act 1993). This obliges us to complete qualifying minor repairs within set timescales for eligible tenancies. If we fail to meet these timescales, tenants and customers have the right to arrange for another contractor to carry out the work and seek compensation from us for the inconvenience caused. More information is available in our Compensation Policy.

4.18 **No access**

- 4.18.1 Where an appointment has been made and we are unable to access the property to complete the repair we will make every effort to contact the tenant. Where contact cannot be made, a no-access card will be left detailing what will happen next in line with our No Access Procedure.

5. Making sure we do what we say...

- 5.1 The Head of Maintenance is responsible for the overall governance of the implementation and adherence of this policy.
- 5.2 The Maintenance Operations Manager is responsible for ensuring this policy is communicated to all relevant stakeholders and appropriate training is provided to all relevant employees to ensure compliance with this policy.
- 5.3 Training will be provided to all new starters within the relevant teams, refresher training will be identified at PDR's and by the Health and Safety team; a suite of e-learning programs will be provided by the People and Culture team.
- 5.4 The Maintenance Operations Manager is responsible for ensuring all appropriate reporting is provided to the relevant groups in a timely manner, specifically:

- Balanced scorecard information
- Annual report information
- Performance reports will be provided to the Leadership team, Ongo Homes Board and Community Voice where requested

5.5 We will consider and learn from all comments, complaints and compliments received from our customers and use information from digital surveys and the Triage team monthly to continuously monitor and improve the service where possible.

6. What does this link to?

6.1 This policy links to the following internal policies, procedures and frameworks:

- Corporate Plan and associated strategies
- Value for Money Framework
- Gas Safety Policy
- Operational Gas Servicing Procedures
- Aids and Adaptations Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Recharge Policy
- Compensation Policy
- Lettable Standard
- Lettings Policy
- Disrepair Procedure
- No Access Procedure

6.2 This policy links to the following legislation and regulation

- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- The Housing Acts 1985 & 1996 & 2004
- Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Equality Act 2010
- Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban development Act 1993
- Building Regulations
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002
- Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Standards

7. We'll look at this again...

7.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years unless there are any significant changes to legislation or regulation or deficiencies are found that necessitate an earlier review.

Appendix 1: Repairs Priorities

The prioritisation of repairs is essential to meet the needs of our tenants and customers and to ensure the delivery of an effective, efficient and value for money repairs service.

Repairs are split into the following categories:

Emergency repairs - are defects or faults that put the health, safety or security of a tenant or customer at immediate risk or that cause harm to the structure of the property. Emergency repairs will be attended to as soon as possible and within 24 hours in any event. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Total loss of electricity or water supply
- Total or partial loss of heat / hot water
- A water leak that cannot be contained
- Insecure window, external door or external lock
- Fire damage / flooding
- Dangerous structures – such as access paths and paving, chimneys or loose roof tiles, ceilings, staircases
- Make safe loose or detached banister or handrail for stairs
- Complete loss of lighting in communal areas
- Unsafe electrical lighting or other fittings

The primary objective of attending an emergency is to make it safe. A full repair will be carried out wherever practicable however, it may be necessary and is acceptable to return at a later date to complete a full repair for which a further job and appointment would be made and would be prioritised accordingly, taking into account the tenants' circumstances.

Urgent repairs - these repairs will be carried out within one week (7 calendar days) of the repair being raised. These include but are not limited to:

- Blocked sink, bath or basin
- Glass in windows and doors (after being made safe as an emergency repair)
- Electrical fittings not working but are not a danger to health
- A water leak that can be contained

Routine repairs - these repairs will be carried out within either 4 weeks (28 calendar days), e.g. new shower curtain, new skirting or 12 weeks (84 calendar days), e.g. plastering an area of approx. 2m², fencing and gates where there are no health issues, depending on the nature of the repair. Routine repairs are defects or faults that do not put the health, safety or security of a tenant or customer at risk or cause harm to the structure of the property and are such that tenants or customers can reasonably live with for a period of time.

Where a tenant, customer or member of the household has disabilities, vulnerabilities, medical or additional needs that are impacted by the nature of the issue requiring repair, we will prioritise this repair to avoid any detriment to the individual concerned. All cases will be managed on a case by case basis.