

Repairs and Maintenance



Tenants Handbook



As your landlord it is our responsibility to keep in good repair the structure and exterior of your home and the installations for the supply of main services within the property, for example water, gas, and electricity.

In the chart below, we explain which repairs we are responsible for and those which you will need to do yourself.

Who is Responsible?

| | Us | You | Notes |
|---------------------------------------|----|-----|---|
| Baths and basins | ✓ | | |
| Blocked sinks and drains | ✓ | | Except where caused by you |
| Boundary fences & walls | ✓ | | Only where these border private land (not a dividing fence), open spaces or pedestrian public areas |
| Brickwork | ✓ | | We may replace garden walls with fencing rather than repairing them |
| Central heating | ✓ | | |
| Chains and plugs for sinks and basins | | ✓ | |
| Chimneys | ✓ | | Except when damaged by your own aerial |
| Cooker gas supply | ✓ | | Only the supply pipes up to and including the bayonet fitting (the gas supply point the cooker connects to) |
| Cooker electric supply | ✓ | | Up to and including the cooker point |

| | Us | You | Notes |
|--|----|-----|--|
| Doors (inside and outside) | ✓ | | |
| Door locks on toilet and bathroom doors | ✓ | | |
| Door numbers | | ✓ | |
| Fascia boards (boards covering the end of the roof) and soffits (boards underneath the front and back of the roof) | ✓ | | Except where damaged by your own aerial or phone line |
| Fences | | ✓ | Dividing fences between properties |
| Fire grates and surrounds | ✓ | | Except decorative fires and surrounds installed by you or a previous tenant |
| Fixtures and fittings | ✓ | | Except for appliances provided by you, or which you accepted responsibility for when you got the tenancy |
| Floorboards | ✓ | | Except where damaged by your own alterations or fittings |
| Garages | ✓ | | We will only repair garages which we let |
| Glass in doors and windows | ✓ | | Except when broken deliberately by you or someone living with or visiting you |
| Gutters | ✓ | | |
| Handbasins | ✓ | | |

| | Us | You | Notes |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----|--|
| Hot-water cylinder jackets | ✓ | | |
| Immersion heaters | ✓ | | |
| Kitchens | ✓ | | Except for minor repairs to kitchen units |
| Light bulbs | | ✓ | This will include lights to bathroom that are in a water resistant unit. |
| Light fittings | ✓ | | Except to fittings provided by you and replacing bulbs and lampshades |
| Locks | ✓ | | |
| Lost keys | | ✓ | |
| Outbuildings | ✓ | | Only those provided by the Council |
| Painting the outside of your home | ✓ | | |
| Painting the inside of your home | | ✓ | |
| Paths | ✓ | | If these provide access to the property |
| Plastering | ✓ | | Except filling minor holes and cracks |
| Porches | ✓ | | Only those the council have put up |
| Pilot lights | | ✓ | Except where you could not reasonably be expected to relight these because of a disability |

| | Us | You | Notes |
|---|----|-----|---|
| Repairing leaks | ✓ | | Except where the damage is caused by you or your fixtures and fittings |
| Replacing washers in taps | ✓ | | |
| Roof tiles | ✓ | | |
| Sink units | ✓ | | |
| Skirting boards | ✓ | | |
| Smoke detectors | ✓ | | |
| Stairs | ✓ | | Except where damaged by your own alterations |
| Switches and sockets, electrical circuits | ✓ | | Except where the damage is caused by you or where you have carried out rewiring |
| Toilet seats | | ✓ | |
| Shared tv aerials and sockets (communal) | ✓ | | |
| Washing lines - individual | | ✓ | |
| Washing lines - shared | ✓ | | |
| Windows | ✓ | | |
| Worktops | ✓ | | |
| Your own tv aerials and sockets | | ✓ | |

Reporting a Repair or Maintenance Request

You must tell us if we need to carry out a repair or maintenance to your home. To report a repair please:

- phone Housing Services on [01268 882326](tel:01268882326)
- report it online via the website www.castlepoint.gov.uk
- write to Housing Services at the Council Offices
- visit Housing Services at the Councils Offices in person
- report to a member of Housing Services when they visit you at home
- report it to your Sheltered Housing Officer (sheltered housing tenants only).

It is important you immediately report any repairs or maintenance required to your home for which the Council is responsible.

If you have an emergency repair request outside normal office hours, it can be reported via our control centre by telephoning [01268 758357](tel:01268758357).

An emergency is usually something that presents a risk to safety, security or health such as:

- no lighting or power
- major pipe bursts or leaks
- electrical defects
- lack of drinking water
- lack of hot water and/or central heating (generally October to April only)
- structural failure.

If you smell gas or suspect gas leaks, please report to National Grid on FREEPHONE number [0800 111 999](tel:0800111999).

National Grid will visit free of charge and investigate the problem. If there is a defect with one of the Council's appliances, please call:

- **Housing Services on 01268 882326 (during office hours)**
- **Control Centre on 0800 833162 (outside office hours).**

Response Times for Repairs

When you report a repair we will give it priority, based on the information you give us. This will determine the response time. The priority given will also reflect any specific issue which we know about you e.g. disability, carer etc. Our priority times are as follows:

- **Emergency (where life or property is at risk):** response within 24 hours to repair or make safe
- **Urgent (where there is no immediate danger to people or property):** work completed within 7 calendar days
- **Routine (non-urgent):** work completed within 28 calendar days.

Avoiding Delays

We may sometimes need to inspect the problem before arranging for a repair to be done. In non emergency cases our inspector will contact you within 24 hours to make an appointment. If you are not available the inspector will leave details so that you can call back to arrange a suitable time for the visit.

Your repair may be delayed if:

- you gave us the wrong information about what needs doing
- we need to order parts which are not immediately available
- the work involves a number of different trades
- you do not keep appointments or arrange for another adult to be present.

What should I do if my repair is not completed on time?

You should contact the Housing Services team on [01268 882326](tel:01268882326) in order that staff can check why there is a delay and, if necessary speak to the Council's contractor. Sometimes the contractor may have had difficulty in gaining access to your home, or there may be delays in obtaining parts or materials.

Who is Responsible for Decorating My Home?

We will externally paint your home and any associated communal areas as part of our planned maintenance programme.

Under the terms of the Tenancy Agreement, you are responsible for the internal decoration of your home.

What Should I Do if I am Elderly or Disabled and Require Aids and Adaptation to My Home?

If you feel you need aids and adaptation work carried out to your home, you should first contact Social Care Direct on [0345 6037630](tel:03456037630). They will assess your needs over the phone and decide whether you are eligible for an assessment to be carried out by an Occupational Therapist.

We may be able to help if you require aids and adaptations, for example grab rails, access ramps, stair lifts, level access shower etc and the Occupational Therapist has recommended this. We often have to prioritise aids and adaptations because the needs referred to us by the Social Care are far greater than the limited budget we have available each year.

Please do not purchase an outdoor electric scooter suitable for a disabled person without first checking with us that your current home has suitable storage and recharging facilities.

The Right to Repair Scheme

Legally you have the right to be compensated if we fail to do certain repairs within specified timescales. The repair must be a “qualifying repair” which if left would jeopardise your health, safety or security.

The Right to Repair Scheme does not give you the right to carry out a repair yourself and then be compensated.

If you require more information on the Right to Repair Scheme, please contact Housing Services by telephoning 01268 882200.

Altering and Improving your Home

You have a legal right to make improvements to your home but you must seek our written permission first.

Examples of improvements include:

- changing kitchen units or kitchen layout
- changing bathroom suites
- erecting a satellite dish (sheltered housing schemes and homes with communal aerials cannot have additional aerial satellite dish erected)
- installing your own central heating system
- installing a shower
- installing patio doors.

We will normally give you permission to make improvements provided that:

- it is carried out by a qualified and experienced person to a professional standard
- you do not cause nuisance and annoyance to neighbours
- you do not make the property unsafe
- you agree to accept all costs of future repair, maintenance and servicing
- you do not damage or reduce the value of the property.

Depending on the nature of the improvement, we may carry out an inspection once work has been completed. You may have a legal right to receive compensation for certain improvements when you leave the property.

If you require further information on compensation for improvements, please contact Housing Services.

Improvements to your Home

We will carry out regular surveys of the condition of the Council's housing stock to assess the need for repairs, maintenance and improvements.

We use this information to prepare our planned maintenance programme which includes the following types of work:

- UPVC windows and doors
- central heating
- kitchens and bathrooms
- roofs and chimneys
- electrical rewiring
- insulation works
- external maintenance.

If you require further information on our planned maintenance programme, please contact Housing Services.

Details of our planned maintenance programme are also periodically reported in our tenants' newsletter.

Rechargeable Repairs

If Castle Point Borough Council needs to do any repairs that are your responsibility, or caused by your actions, you will need to pay. This is called a recharge.

Could I Get Charged for Any Repairs?

Yes, if you or a visitor to your home cause damage. For example, if you break a window to gain entry to your property after accidentally locking yourself out, we would recharge you for the cost of these repairs. When you report a repair, we will tell you if you will be charged and also give you an indication of the cost. You may be able to claim back the cost of a rechargeable repair, e.g. in the case of accidental damage, through your personal contents insurance policy. Please check your policy details to see if you are covered.

What Could You Be Recharged for?

- for failing to return a full set of keys or returning them late
- for leaving behind belongings, rubbish or floor coverings unless agreed with an inspector
- for not leaving the property clean, in good repair and reasonable decorative order, inside and out - know which repairs are your responsibility (please see the checklist provided earlier)
- for leaving the garden untidy
- for improvements or minor alterations made without prior permission, which we will need to remove. For example, shelving, non-standard lighting and electrical fittings, ponds, sheds or cat flaps. Please note some items can be left if agreed with an inspector.

How Much Will You Be Charged?

One week extra rent if you do not hand in a full set of keys, or if you hand them in late, (i.e. after 10 am on Monday). We will recharge you for the costs of repairs that we reasonably decide are your responsibility.

If you need advice about possible recharges when moving home, please contact Housing Services.

Health and Safety

Gas

Help us to keep you safe.

By law we must inspect all appliances that we own. Once we have carried out a check we will give you a gas safety certificate which you must keep in a safe place. If you do not let us into your home to inspect an appliance, we may take legal action against you.

Do not use an appliance if you think that it is not working properly. Look out for any danger signs, like a yellow or an orange flame (except for fuel-effect fires, such as 'living gas' fires, which have these colour flames), soot or stains around the appliance, and pilot lights that have blown out.

Keep your home well ventilated. You should not cover or block any fixed air vents, air bricks or outside flues.

What You Should and Shouldn't Do If You Smell Gas

Do:

- open all windows and doors
- put out cigarettes
- make sure that you have not accidentally left the gas supply to an appliance on, or that a pilot light has not gone out
- turn the gas supply off at the meter.

Do not:

- use matches or naked flames
- smoke
- turn any electrical switches on or off - including light switches and doorbells.

A suspected gas leak should firstly be reported to National Grid on 0800 111 999. National Grid will visit free of charge and investigate the problem. If it's found that there is a defect with one of the Council's appliances, please call:

- **Housing Services on 01268 882326 (during office hours)**
- **Control Centre on 01268 758357 (outside office hours).**

Electricity

Make sure that you know how to turn the electricity supply off at the mains in case of an emergency. The larger red switch will be on the fuse box which is normally located under the stairs or in the hallway.

When this is switched off, all the electricity supply to your home will be cut off.

Some Safety Tips

- switch off appliances that are not in use
- turn off and disconnect televisions at night
- ensure all plugs are wired correctly and never wire more than one appliance into one plug
- check cables regularly and replace them if they are damaged
- never touch switches with damp or wet hands
- do not run appliances from light fittings
- if you need to use an electrical appliance outside (for example, a lawnmower), make sure you use a 'residual current device' (RCD). This disconnects the electricity supply if the electric current is not balanced
- a lot of appliances have moulded plugs which cannot be replaced. If you do have to replace a plug, make sure you use a good-quality plug and that it is correctly wired
- make sure you have a torch available with good batteries.

Electrical systems have fuses or circuit breakers which will blow when the system is overloaded and cut off supply. To reconnect the supply, circuit breakers can be switched back on after disconnecting the appliance you think caused the fault.

Fuses will need to be replaced: it is your responsibility to do this.

Fire

To reduce the risk of fire:

- keep matches away from children
- do not use portable gas or paraffin heaters
- do not leave candles unattended
- ensure that open fires are guarded
- do not prop fire doors open
- do not interfere with fire equipment
- never smoke in bed
- unplug electrical appliances, particularly at night
- ensure that heaters cannot be knocked over and they are not too near to furniture.

If there is a fire in your home:

- get everyone out immediately
- close all windows and doors if you can
- dial **999** and ask for the Fire Service.

If you are unable to return to your home, we will provide temporary accommodation. This could be bed and breakfast accommodation or an alternative property until repairs and redecoration has been carried out. We will provide permanent re-housing if your home is no longer habitable.

If an investigation proves that a fire was started deliberately by a tenant, we will not provide permanent re-housing.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide poisoning is caused by gas appliance which do not work properly and where there is not enough ventilation in the room.

Carbon monoxide can kill without warning and you cannot see it or smell it.

We have a contract with a GAS SAFE approved contractor to check and service the gas appliances in your home every year. We will arrange this on your behalf and the contractor will contact you at the appropriate time to arrange a mutually convenient appointment.

This check and service includes the Council's appliances e.g. gas boilers and gas fires. It also includes a visual check of your own appliances e.g. gas cookers.

Annual gas safety checks and services are essential. Unsafe gas appliances can kill. Please ensure that you cooperate with access arrangements to have gas appliances checked and serviced.

In addition to the annual check, you can help yourself:

- never block air vents on an appliance
- never block outside grilles, flues or air bricks
- never use an appliance if you think is not working properly
- always use GAS SAFE registered contractors to fit and service your gas cookers and any other gas appliances of your own
- never sleep in rooms that have a gas back boiler.

Water Leaks

It is our job to deal with any leaks to the water supply in your home. Leaks outside your home may have to be repaired either by us or by Essex and Suffolk Water Company. If there is a problem, contact Housing Services for advice.

Damp and Mould

To keep your home free from damp and mould, you need to avoid creating condensation.

What is Condensation?

There is always some moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. As the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of water appear. This is condensation. It is most noticeable when you breathe out on a cold day or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath or shower. Condensation occurs mainly in cold weather, whether it is raining or dry. It does not leave a 'tidemark'. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. Look for it in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards. It often forms on north-facing walls.

Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also come from:

- leaking pipes, waste or overflows
- rain seeping through the roof where a tile is missing or spilling from a blocked gutter, or entering around window frames
- rising damp due to a defective damp-course or because there is no damp-course.

Condensation occurs in every home, but you can reduce its effects by doing the following.

- drying clothes outdoors if possible. If you have a tumble dryer, you must fit an outside vent to it
- opening windows, particularly when cooking
- when running a bath, put the cold water in before the hot to reduce the steam and keep the bathroom door closed
- ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and do not put too many items in them as this stops air circulating
- keeping constant heat in your home so there are no cold surfaces for water vapour to settle on
- you may find using a de-humidifier helps to reduce condensation especially in colder months.

Treating Moulds

Treat any mould you may have in your home. If you deal with the basic problem of condensation, mould should not reappear

- to kill and remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash which carries a Health and Safety Executive 'approval number'. Follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. Dry-clean mildewed cloths and shampoo carpets. Distributing mould by brushing or vacuum cleaning can increase the risk of respiratory problems
- after treating walls, redecorate using a good quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould recurring.

Key Points to Remember

The only long-lasting way to avoid severe mould in your home is to eliminate dampness.

- reduce the amount of moisture you produce
- improve ventilation
- insulate, draught proof and heat the property.

Frost Protection and Frozen/ Burst Pipes

In cold weather, try and keep your home fairly warm at all times. If water freezes in pipes and cisterns, it can cause serious damage.

If you are leaving your home empty during cold weather, try and follow these simple rules:

- turn off the stop cock (please contact Housing Services if you do not know where this is)
- drain all the water from the system by turning on all the taps and flushing the toilet
- if you can, leave your central heating system turned on at a lower temperature.

When you return home, turn on your stop cock. **If you have any problems, please contact Housing Services by telephoning 01268 882326.**

If your pipes freeze or burst:

- turn off the stop cock
- switch off your immersion heater if you have one
- turn on all your taps to drain as much water as possible from the system
- try and find out where the water is coming from
- do not use lights if water is leaking through a ceiling rose
- **contact Housing Services by telephoning 01268 882326 or our Control Centre by telephoning 01268 758357 (outside office hours only).**

Asbestos

Castle Point Council is committed to reducing any risk to the health of its employees, tenants, contractors and the public from asbestos in its properties.

We maintain an Asbestos Register for all the properties that we manage.

When is Asbestos a Problem?

Even if there is asbestos in your home, it is not usually a problem. Asbestos only becomes a problem if it is disturbed, damaged or deteriorates with age.

Things to Remember About Asbestos:

- asbestos does not usually pose a risk unless it is damaged or disturbed
- it is often best to leave asbestos-containing products where they are if they are in good condition and unlikely to be disturbed
- try to make sure anything containing asbestos remains in good condition
- do not drill, saw, scrub or sand anything you think may contain asbestos
- asbestos is no longer used in construction or in goods such as toasters or hairdryers in this country. However, imported goods may still contain asbestos
- there is no evidence to suggest that the use of asbestos cement in cold water tanks poses any risk of contaminating the water supply.

Who to Contact

If you have any concerns about asbestos in your home, please contact our Housing Services team on [01268 882326](tel:01268882326). Alternatively you can email us at maintenance@castlepoint.gov.uk

Useful Links

If you want to find out more about asbestos, we recommend the following websites: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos

Saving Energy

We will monitor energy efficiency for your home and can give advice on how to reduce fuel bills and keep warm. You can save energy by:

- making sure your hot-water cylinder and loft are well insulated
- closing doors and curtains in cold weather to keep rooms warm
- taking a shower instead of a bath
- using an electric heater with a thermostat
- using low-energy light bulbs.

Insurance

We are responsible for insuring the structure of your home but this does not include your contents or personal possessions.

We therefore strongly recommend that you have your contents and personal possessions insured against fire, theft, flooding or accidental damage.

How to contact us

Housing Services 01268 882200
(Housing Hot Key Press 0)

Housing Repairs 01268 882326

Housing Repairs (out of hours) . . . 0800 833162