

repairs and maintenance  
handbook



إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

જો તમને માહિતી બીજા ભાષા અથવા રચનામાં જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી અમને વિનંતી કરો.

آگآپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو ہمارے سربراہی ہم سے پوچھیے۔



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# Introduction

Welcome to your new home.

We want you to be happy in your home and we also want to be a good landlord. This Handbook tells you what we expect from you and what standards of service you should get from us.

We have tried to make sure that this Handbook has the kind of information that will help you as a resident. If you have any questions, or would like more information, please contact us and we will be happy to help you.

If you would like this Handbook put onto an audio cassette, please let us know. We will arrange for a cassette to be sent to you.

# Welcome to your new home

# How to Contact Us

Our office is open Monday to Thursday from 9am to 5pm and Friday from 10am to 5pm.

Address:                      Digby House  
Riverside Office Centre  
Causton Road  
Colchester  
Essex  
CO1 1RJ

Telephone	01206 244700
24 hour answerphone	01206 244744
Fax	01206 760403
E-mail	<a href="mailto:repairs@colnehousing.co.uk">repairs@colnehousing.co.uk</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.colnehousing.co.uk">www.colnehousing.co.uk</a>



# Service Standards

We want to provide you with an excellent service at all times and welcome your comments on how we could improve.

We aim to:

- ✓ Deal with your enquiry in a polite, courteous and professional way
- ✓ See all visitors within 5 minutes
- ✓ Answer all telephone calls within 5 rings
- ✓ Answer your queries the first time you contact us. However, if we are not able to assist immediately, a member of staff will telephone you within 24 hours
- ✓ Reply to your letters and complaints within two weeks of receiving them
- ✓ Arrange appointments for you to see a member of staff
- ✓ Respond to repairs within the following timescales:
  - Emergency B – Same day
  - Emergency C – End of next working day
  - Urgent – Within 3 working days
  - Routine – Within 15 working days
- ✓ Provide an out of hours telephone contact for emergency repairs



# About Repairs

Responsibility for repair work is divided between the Society and the resident. We want to maintain our homes as best we can and we rely on you to help us by reporting repairs and letting us in to do them.

## **Your Responsibilities**

We are not responsible for all repairs to your home. You are expected to keep your

home in a good condition and to do minor repairs yourself. Your responsibilities include:

- Decorating the inside of your home
- Filling small cracks in plaster and woodwork
- Maintaining and repairing your own fittings and appliances
- Arranging for the installation of your own washing machine, dishwasher, and gas or electric cooker
- Putting up curtain and shower rails, adapting doors to accommodate carpets, fitting draught excluders
- Repairing or replacing light bulbs, fluorescent tubes, fuses and doorbells
- Renewing batteries in smoke detectors
- Clearing blocked sinks, toilets and pipes
- Replacing sink and bath plugs
- Repairing or replacing bathroom cabinets, towel rails, soap holders, toilet roll holders and mirrors
- Cleaning out showerheads

- Replacing locks as a result of a lost key. Replacing lost keys. Fitting extra locks or catches
- Keeping airbricks and ventilators clear
- Re-lighting boilers and setting heating controls. If your boiler will not re-light or goes out continually, please report this to us
- Bleeding radiators
- Oiling locks and hinges
- Clearing pest infestations, such as wasp or bee nests, ants, mice, birds, rats etc, unless in communal areas
- Replacing rotary dryers, unless in communal areas
- Replacing over-bath dryers
- Providing and replacing dustbins, except in communal bin store areas
- Repairing or replacing sheds

You are also responsible for repairing or replacing any items that are damaged by you, your friends, relatives, or someone else living with you or visiting you. We will only agree to do these repairs if your home is not secure as a

result of the damage. You will have to pay us back the full cost of the repair work.

## **Our Responsibilities**

We have a responsibility to maintain and repair:

- the structure and outside of your home
- the communal areas
- the fixtures and fittings

These include:

- drains, gutters and exterior pipes. If we unblock your drain and it has been blocked through unreasonable usage, you will be charged the cost of the repair
- the roof
- outside walls and doors, windowsills, window catches, sash cords and window frames (including painting and decorating outside)
- inside walls, floors and ceilings, doors and door frames, door hinges and skirting boards (but not including painting and decoration)
- basins, sinks, baths, showers, toilets, water supply and waste pipes

- electric wiring such as sockets and switches
- water heaters, fireplaces, fitted fires and central heating installations
- pathways and steps
- garages and stores
- boundary walls and fences
- pest infestation in communal areas

### **Gas Boiler Servicing**

We will service your gas boiler every year. **It is vitally important that you allow our gas engineers to do this work by giving them access to your home.** If you do not you are putting your and your family's lives in danger. **Faulty gas boilers can kill.**

We take this matter so seriously that if you do not give our gas engineers access to service your boiler, we will ask a County Court Judge to give us permission to enter your home. We will make sure that your property is secure after our contractors leave, but you will be responsible for paying us back our court costs and the cost of any repairs to your front door.

## **Decorating Scheme**

If you are 65 or over, or have a disability that prevents you from doing decorating work, you may qualify for our decoration scheme.

If you live in one of our Sheltered Housing schemes, we will contact you about decorating your flat. If you do not live in a Sheltered Housing scheme, you can either contact our Customer Services Team or Property Services Team, or speak to your Housing Officer.



# The Repairs Service

## **How to Report a Repair**

It is very important you let us know immediately if any repairs are needed to your home.

You can report your repair on our repairs direct line, 01206 244700. You can also report repairs to your Housing Officer, Scheme Officer or other staff visiting your home.

You can report non-urgent repairs by email to **repairs@colnehousing.co.uk**.

If you have just moved into a newly built home, or one which the Society has just bought, your general repairs will be covered by the builder for the first 6 months and the electricity and plumbing repairs for the first 12 months. Please see the details given to you in your welcome pack.

When you report your repair, please tell us:

- your name
- your address
- your telephone number (if you have one)
- what repair needs doing
- where the problem is
- when it occurred

If you are out all day, please make arrangements for our contractors to have access to your home, either by leaving keys with a neighbour or friend, or arranging for a member of your family to be at your home. Our contractors are not able to do routine repairs outside regular working hours.

When you have reported your repair, we will tell you:

- If we need to look at your repair before the work can be ordered
- Who will be doing your repair
- What priority your repair has been given
- When the contractor will finish the work by

### **How Quickly will we do your Repair?**

#### ***Emergency Repairs***

- Gas leaks
- Dangerous electrical faults
- Complete lighting failure
- Complete power failure
- Total loss of water supply – but call your supplier first, as they may be working on the mains supply
- Serious water leaks from tanks and pipes
- Blocked drains
- Dangerous structures

- Failure of heating system in winter; when properties are occupied by elderly tenants, tenants with young children or tenants who are vulnerable
- Re-glazing/boarding up broken windows/doors where its absence presents a lack of security

### ***Urgent Repairs***

- Lift breakdown
- Failure of hot/cold water services
- Faulty front door locks
- Faulty smoke detectors
- Water leaking from gas boiler

### ***Routine Repairs***

- All other repairs

This list does not include every type of repair, but it is a guide to our general policy. The tradesperson should complete your repair in one visit, although this is not always possible.

### **Emergency and Urgent Repairs**

The tradesperson may have to do a temporary repair and call back during the week. They will let you know when they will call back. If you have no heating in winter and parts need to be ordered before your boiler can be repaired, the tradesperson will give you portable electric heaters.

### **Out of Hours Emergency Repairs**

If you have a sudden emergency during the evening or at weekends, please call our emergency repairs service on 01732 781979.



Our tradesperson may give you advice over the telephone to cure the problem. If they are not able to do this, they will call to your home to carry out the repair.

If you live in sheltered housing, you can contact Helpline by pulling the emergency cord. Helpline will have our contractors' emergency telephone numbers and will call for you.

If your repair is not an emergency and can wait until the office reopens, DO NOT call out a tradesperson. We pay a premium fee whenever a tradesperson is called to an out of hours repair. If you misuse this service, the cost will be charged to you.

Details of charges for repairs are given on page 25 of this handbook.

### **What if you are out when the Tradesperson Calls?**

If our contractors call at your home to do a repair and you are not in, they will leave a calling card asking you to contact them to arrange an appointment. It is very important that you will contact the contractor otherwise your repair will not be completed.

If a tradesperson leaves you two calling cards and you do not respond, we pay a fee for the tradesperson's time. This cost will be charged to you.

Details of charges for repairs are given later in this Handbook.

### **Appointments**

If your repair is routine, you will be offered an appointment. This will be either a morning, midday or an afternoon appointment on a date that suits you. Please note, however, that the earliest appointment we can offer will be one week from the date you reported the repair. Morning appointments are from 8am to 11am, midday appointments are from 11am to 2pm, and afternoon appointments are from 2pm to 6pm. If we make an appointment for you, we will send you a letter confirming the appointment date and time. If you are not at home for the appointment, you will be charged a call out fee.

### **Elderly Residents and Residents with a Disability**

If you are an elderly resident or are disabled, and the required repair affects your ability to live or manage independently, we can do your routine repairs more quickly. Please let us know when you report your repair, if you need the work to be carried out more quickly.

## **Inspecting Repair Work**

Sometimes, on less straightforward jobs, a Property Services Officer may call to inspect your repair before the work is ordered. This is so that the correct work can be ordered and the repair completed the first time the tradesperson calls to your home.

We carry out random inspections of the work carried out by our contractors. We may also telephone you and ask for your views or send you a questionnaire asking your views on the repair service. Please help us to improve our service by responding to these surveys.

## **Charges**

The following information is a guide to costs that may be charged to you, as detailed earlier.

### **Misuse of Repairs Service**

Minimum Charge of £35 plus VAT

### **Abortive Call Charge**

£10 plus VAT

### **Misuse of Out-Of-Hours Service**

Minimum Charge of £40 plus VAT

# When Things Go Wrong

## **Unsatisfactory Work**

If you are not happy with the standard of any repair, please contact us immediately. We will arrange for a member of staff to inspect the work and we will tell the contractor to do the work again if we agree that it is below the expected standard.

If our contractors have not done your repair within time, please contact us immediately. We will arrange a date for our contractors to call and let you know why the repair has been delayed.

### **Making a Complaint**

If you are still not happy with the standard of repair, or the service you have received, you should let us know by making an official complaint. You can make a complaint in several ways

- By telephone
- By email
- By fax
- In person
- In writing

We aim to answer all complaints within 10 working days. If you are not happy with our reply, please refer to our complaints leaflet for guidance on who to contact next.

If you remain unhappy after all the stages of our procedure have been followed, you should contact the Independent Housing Ombudsman. Please ask us for a leaflet about the Ombudsman service.

There are also a number of legal remedies available to you:

### **Right to Repair**

If we do not do an emergency or urgent repair within agreed timescales, you have the right to claim compensation from the Society. This is called the Right to Repair.

You must let us know immediately if we have not done an emergency or urgent repair. You must tell us that you want to claim under the Right to Repair Scheme. We will then contact our contractors and arrange for them to do the repair the same day, or the next day if you contact us after 3pm. If our contractor again fails to do the repair on time, you will be entitled to compensation.

Compensation is set at £10 plus an additional £2 for each day's delay in completing the repair, up to a maximum of £50.

However, if the repair has not been completed in time because you have not provided access to your property, you will not be entitled to compensation.

The Right to Repair only covers repairs that cost between £20 and £250, and does not include repairs that are part of a planned maintenance programme, such as the replacement of boilers, kitchens or bathrooms.

The Right to Repair does not apply if our contractors have done a temporary repair, or have provided you with portable heaters if your heating has failed.

### **Other Legal Rights**

- You have the right under Section 125 of the 1974 Housing Act to ask the County Court for an Order to make us carry out any outstanding repairs that are our responsibility.
- You can sue us for damages in the County Court for failing to carry out our duties under Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.
- You can take action against us in the Magistrates Court under Section 99 of the Public Health Act 1936 if there is a defect in your home which is likely to injure your health.
- You can complain to a Justice of the Peace, that your home is unfit for human habitation under Section 4 of the Housing Act 1957.

If you want to pursue legal remedies, get in touch with the Citizens Advice Bureau, Law Centre, Solicitor or Housing Advice Centre first.



# Improving Your Home

## **Your Right to carry out Improvements and Alterations**

You can carry out alterations and improvements to your home, provided you first ask us in writing. We will only refuse permission if:

- The alteration would make the building unsafe

- The alteration would prevent your home being used for its original purpose, for example, knocking two bedrooms into one
- The alteration does not receive approval from relevant statutory agencies, for example, the Council Planning Department

If we grant permission, we may ask you to provide us with detailed plans, such as a works specification and details of who is to carry out the work for you. You will be expected to get Building Regulations Consent and Planning Permission where appropriate. We may wish to inspect the work after it has been completed.

We will only allow you to undertake gas or electrical work if you employ Gas Safe registered contractors for work on gas installations and NICEIC approved installers for work on electricity supplies.

If alteration work is done without our permission, you may be asked to return the property to its original condition. If you do not do so, we will charge you for doing this work ourselves.

### **Asbestos**

Before 1998, asbestos was sometimes used in artexing. Please bear this in mind if you are going to sand down any artex in your home.

Although this asbestos is not harmful in small quantities it is always best to wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose when sanding.

### **Your Right to Compensation for Improvements**

Compensation is given to residents who have paid for their own home improvements, and leave the property before they have gained full benefit from their investment. You will be entitled to claim compensation for improvements providing that:

- You have a secure or an assured tenancy
- You obtained permission for the alteration before the work was done
- The completed work was inspected and all conditions met
- You have kept all relevant invoices, receipts etc

Residents who carried out their own improvements will not be compensated for their own labour.

Compensation is calculated by a specified formula and only includes the items listed opposite:


Improvement	Notional life (in years)
Bath or shower	12
Wash hand basin	12
Toilet	12
Kitchen sink	10
Storage cupboards in bathroom or kitchen	10
Work surfaces for food preparation	10
Space or water heating	12
Thermostatic radiator valves	7
Insulation of pipes, water tank or cylinder	10
Loft insulation	20
Cavity wall insulation	20
Draught proofing of external door or windows	8
Double glazing or other window replacement or secondary glazing	20
Rewiring or the provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings (including smoke detectors)	15
Security measures, excluding burglar alarm systems	10



# Planned Maintenance

We want to make sure your home is well looked after in the long term.

We will paint the outside of your home every five years. This work may include repairs to doors, windows, soffits and bargeboards.



We carry out surveys of some of our properties from each area every five years. This helps us identify where upgrades are needed to our stock.

If we are upgrading your property by, for example, installing a new kitchen, we will consult and discuss the proposed work with you.

You will be asked to let us know if you are going away from your home.

We will then write to you and let you know when the work will be carried out.



# Looking After Your Home

You must keep your home in a clean, tidy and healthy state. If you live in a property with shared areas, you are also responsible along with the other residents for keeping these areas clean and tidy.

If you do not keep your home in a clean, tidy and healthy state, our contractors can refuse to do any repairs to your property until your home is brought up to a good standard.

If necessary, we can take court action against you.

### **Insurance**

It is very important that you arrange your own insurance to cover your belongings, your decorations, any alterations you have made to your home and to cover accidental damage. Colne Housing Society is not responsible for paying for any damage to your belongings unless this is due to negligence on our behalf, for example, if you have reported a burst pipe and we do not repair it within time. Remember, we only insure the building – not your possessions.

The consequences of not being insured can be devastating. Imagine how you would cope if a fire or flood destroyed your possessions. We cannot recommend strongly enough that you get your possessions insured – treat this as an essential outgoing in the same way as your rent, gas and electricity bills.

A leaflet on a low cost residents' insurance scheme has been included in your tenancy pack. If you do not have this leaflet, please contact us and we will send you one.

## **Maintaining Your Garden**

It is your responsibility to keep your garden neat and tidy. Whilst we do not expect everyone to be a keen gardener, problems can be caused if gardens are left to become overgrown.

If your garden is turfed and the turf dies, we will not replace it for you. You must make sure that any hedges and trees in your garden do not overhang public footpaths and roads.

If you have trees in your garden, you are responsible for having them trimmed and pruned. We will only arrange to do this for you if the trees have a Preservation Order on them.

You must not park a vehicle on your garden unless there is a proper hardstanding area and a dropped kerb.

You must not store rubbish or household items in your garden.

## **Communal Gardens**

If you have use of a communal garden, we will arrange for the grass to be cut and trees, shrubs and hedges to be trimmed and pruned.

## **Satellite Dishes, Aerials and Cable**

If you want to install a satellite dish, TV or radio aerial, you will need to obtain written permission from us. Permission is usually given, as long as:

- You obtain any consent required from the local authority. If more than one dish is installed in a block of flats, planning permission is required
- You accept responsibility for all costs associated with the provision and maintenance of the system
- The improvement must be of a good standard. See the section on compensation for improvements.

## **Cable and Telephone Points**

We are not responsible for the repair and maintenance of cable and telephone points. Please contact your service provider.

## **Gas and Electricity Meters and Meter Boxes**

We are not responsible for the repair and maintenance of your meters or meter boxes. Please contact your service provider.



# Safety in Your Home

To help you keep your home in good condition and prevent future problems:

- Make sure you know where the main stopcock is and how to turn it off
- Make sure you know how to turn off your electricity and gas supply in an emergency. If you do not, ask any of our staff or contractors when they next visit you.

## If You Smell Gas

- Open the doors and windows to get rid of the gas
- Turn off gas cookers and anything else with a naked flame, such as a pilot light. Do not try to relight until the smell of gas has been cleared from the property
- Do not use any electrical equipment, including light switches and door bells, either by turning them on or off
- If the leak cannot be stopped by turning off an appliance, or you are uncertain whether it has been stopped, turn the main gas supply off at the meter and phone TRANSCO on **0800 111 999** – this is the gas emergency service. They will not charge you for a call-out

## Electricity

The risk of a fire or injury being caused by an electrical fault can be reduced if you:

- Do not leave appliances plugged in and switched on, unless you are actually using them
- Do not run flex beneath carpet

- Do not use any electrical appliances in the bathroom, e.g. hair dryers, curling tongs, radios, portable TVs, portable heaters unless, like shavers, they are made for the purpose
- Never wire more than one appliance to one plug
- Never plug electrical appliances into light fittings
- Never touch anything electrical with wet hands
- Do not hang decorations or paper around light fittings or bulbs
- Make sure flexes are in good condition and appliances are correctly fused
- If you ever accidentally cut through a flex that is plugged into a socket, do not pick up the ends until you have pulled out the plug.

### **Smoke Detectors**

Make sure that your smoke detectors are kept free of dust and dirt and are not obstructed in any way. Test your smoke detectors every month to make sure that they are working, and change the batteries as necessary.

## Fire

If your home catches fire, get everyone outside immediately, close as many doors behind the fire as possible, and call the Fire Brigade. If you cannot return to your home following fire damage, you should contact the Local Authority Housing Department for assistance. Their telephone numbers are:

Colchester: 01206 282222

Maldon: 01621 854477

Tendring: 01255 425501

Chelmsford: 01245 606606

## Theft – Home Security

Do not make it easy for thieves to get into your home. Always:

- Lock all doors and windows when you are out
- Do not leave keys conveniently concealed beneath door mats or behind letter boxes (it is just as convenient for thieves!)

- Do not allow strangers into your home. Ask any unknown callers for proof of identity. Colne staff and tradespersons all carry identification cards and you should ask to see them
- Remember to cancel milk and newspapers if you are away from home
- Do not leave cash or valuables on display
- Do not leave notes on your front door
- Let the Police know if you are going away for a long period

It can be worthwhile for you to contact the Local Crime Prevention Officer. They can advise you on inexpensive security measures, such as chains, spy holes, window locks and security bolts.



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