

TAMIL COMMUNITY HOUSING – MAINTENANCE POLICY

Maintenance Policy

Purpose and Scope

As a registered social landlord, TCHA is expected to comply with the service standards defined by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) whose regulatory requirements are set out in a series of standards published in April 2012, including the Home Standard for repairs and maintenance, and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard relating to service delivery. Specific requirements of the HCA may also be set out separately in grant agreements for new build developments funded by them.

TCHA must comply with the wide range of legislative obligations that impact on the delivery of the repairs and maintenance service, and in particular those covering health and safety, and disrepair.

Other service delivery considerations may be contained within agency management agreements regarding the performance of the maintenance service, and the production of performance information.

This policy sets out TCHA's commitments for the delivery of the responsive and planned maintenance service, and links directly with TCHA's Financial Regulations and procedures, and related policies for complaints, compensation, customer service and tenant involvement.

Policy Aims and Objectives

TCHA's overriding objective for the maintenance policy is to carry out maintenance as quickly and as cost effectively as possible, so that its properties are maintained to a high standard of repair in accordance with legal and regulatory responsibilities, and that tenants are satisfied with the maintenance service provided by the Association.

In order to achieve this objective TCHA aims to:

- Provide tenants with clear information about the standard of service they can expect
- Value tenants' feedback, and enable tenants to influence the development of the maintenance service
- Ensure that effective arrangements are in place to meet health and safety and other legal responsibilities
- Develop and review the performance of the service to achieve quality and value for money
- Invest in homes through a programme of planned and cyclical maintenance, as part of a long term asset management strategy
- Support the delivery of the maintenance policy through staff training and service development

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Definitions

Responsive Repairs

A responsive repair is an item of minor or routine maintenance that is identified by a tenant or through an inspection that is a landlord responsibility, and is required to be carried out within a specified target timescale.

Reactive Maintenance

Minor items of repair able to be carried out in a short timescale after a defect is reported.

Planned Maintenance

Planned maintenance is work that is carried out on a cyclical basis (e.g. external painting), including the programmed replacement or upgrading of building components (e.g. roofs, kitchens, bathrooms, central heating, etc.)

Decent Homes

Is the governments' minimum standard for all social housing in England. It includes provisions for health and safety, comfort, energy efficiency, standard of repair and modern facilities.

Warm Homes Standard

The government's vision for housing includes the achievement of a warm homes standard which requires:

- Every home having loft and cavity wall insulation by 2015
- Every home having a smart meter and display to help households manage their energy use more efficiently

The approach to implementation will continue from, and build on, the existing Carbon Emission Reduction Target programme from 2012.

Void

An empty property awaiting re-letting.

Void turnaround

Is the time period measured in calendar days from the date the tenancy ends to the date of the next letting.

Letting standard

The minimum standard for cleaning and repairs to a void property that a new tenant is offered.

Content

1. Regulation:

TCHA has statutory and regulatory responsibility for the maintenance of properties that it owns. It also acts as managing agent for Registered Social Landlords that

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retain responsibility for the repairs service, or are responsible as the freehold owner for external work, and TCHA refers repair requests to them.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) took over responsibility from the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) for the regulation of social housing providers in England from 1st April 2012. Their published regulatory guidance sets out the framework for regulating economic and consumer standards:

- Governance and financial viability
- Value for money
- Rent
- Tenant involvement and empowerment
- Home
- Tenancy Neighbourhood and Community

The home standard requires landlords to meet its legal obligations, achieve the **Decent Homes** standard, provide a cost effective repairs service, and a planned maintenance programme.

Legal remedies exist for tenants to use if a landlord fails in its responsibility to maintain their home in a reasonable state of repair, with specific provisions for breaches of health and safety.

2. Customer Service and Equality:

TCHA's customer service standards are set out in its Customer Service policy.

2.1 Landlord and tenant responsibilities

Landlord and tenant responsibilities for repair are set out in the tenancy agreement and the tenant handbook. Information is also provided on the website and in publications including newsletters, which are made available in other languages, and alternative formats in line with the Customer Service policy.

2.2 Customer data

TCHA recognises the importance of customer knowledge in the provision of services, and the requirement to store and use that information in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998, and guidance issued by the Information Commissioner. We will seek to identify customers' preferred methods of contact to facilitate the operation of the repairs service, and make use of new technology including text messaging to communicate effectively.

2.3 Vulnerability

Tenants who are over 65 years of age and have no able bodied person living with them, tenants who have mobility difficulty or serious visual impairment and have no able bodied person living with them, and tenants in supported housing, may be eligible for a free service for certain repair work that is normally the tenant's responsibility. We may also prioritise repair work carried out for vulnerable tenants at our discretion.

2.4 Equality

TCHA will ensure that there is no discrimination in service access or delivery, and will use tenant feedback as part of performance review. We will obtain equality

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information from contractors seeking to join the approved list, and monitor their service through post inspections, tenant satisfaction surveys, and regular meetings.

3. Responsive maintenance:

TCHA aims to provide a prompt and efficient responsive repairs service to its tenants that achieves value for money. We will seek to contain the volume and cost of responsive maintenance by carrying out a programme of annual preventative maintenance visits, and regular scheme inspections to maintain the quality of our homes.

3.1 Reporting methods

We offer a choice of methods to report repairs. Tenants may report repairs via the website, email, in writing, or by 'phone calls or text messages.

3.2 Target timescales for repairs

Responsive repairs are grouped in accordance with a target timescale for completion as set out in the tenant handbook:

Emergency	24 hour response
Urgent	within 5 working days
Routine	within 20 working days

Where TCHA acts as the managing agent for another Registered Social Landlord who retains responsibility for repairs, there may be differences in the categories of repairs and target timescales, and tenants will be informed when this applies.

If a delay arises in the arrangements to complete repair work (sometimes due to adverse weather conditions or the availability of replacement parts), the tenant will be kept informed of any change to the target timescale for completion.

3.3 Out of hours emergency work

A rota system operates outside office hours to receive emergency repair requests. Only genuine emergency work will be ordered to make safe, and arrangements will be made to progress any follow up work the next day.

3.4 Right to Repair

TCHA will comply with statutory obligations and contractual provisions for the Right to Repair. The Right to Repair scheme sets time limits for 'qualifying repairs' costing less than £250 to be completed. They include:

- unsafe power, or lighting sockets, or electrical fittings
- blocked flues to fires or boilers
- leaking roofs
- toilets that won't flush
- blocked sinks, baths or basins
- leaking or flooding from pipes, tanks or cisterns
- loose or broken banisters or handrails.

If a 'qualifying repair' is not completed within the prescribed time limit (the first period) the tenant can require a second contractor to be appointed to complete the

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repair. If the repair is not completed by the end of the second prescribed period, the tenant will be entitled to claim compensation.

3.5 Appointments

TCHA offers appointments for pre-inspections. We also require approved contractors to offer appointments when orders are placed.

3.6 Access

If a tenant fails to provide access to contractors at the agreed appointment time, a charge may be made.

3.7 Pre-inspection

It is not always possible to diagnose repairs accurately when they are reported, and a pre-inspection visit or technical inspection may be needed before work can be ordered. An appointment will be arranged with the tenant, normally within 2 working days.

3.8 Post inspection

TCHA carries out a post inspection of a random selection of an agreed percentage of all completed work either by telephoning the tenant, or arranging home visit in order to check quality standards.

3.9 Contractor recalls

TCHA expects its contractors to complete repairs work to a satisfactory standard and they may be recalled to resolve repair requests related to unsatisfactory work carried out within the past three months.

3.10 Rechargeable Repairs

TCHA will recharge tenants for the costs of works resulting from neglect, deliberate or accidental damage (including damage by members of their household or visitors), and missed appointments.

3.11 Aids and adaptations

TCHA recognises that some tenants may need to adapt their home to meet the needs of individual members of their household. Requests for the installation of aids and adaptations will be considered on their individual merits in liaison with the local authority.

3.12 Voids and letting standard

It is recognised good practice that TCHA has in place an agreed letting standard.

TCHA aims to comply with a letting standard to ensure that all properties meet a minimum standard before letting. The standard may be varied to meet the requirements of each tenure type, and will comply with all current legislation relating to structural stability, asbestos removal, repair, freedom from damp, lighting, heating, ventilation, sanitation, drainage, pest control, and fire safety at the point of letting.

Properties requiring major works, or which are included in rehabilitation or demolition programmes, will be kept wind and weathertight pending decanting.

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3.13 Alterations

Tenants may make written applications to carry out alterations or improvements to their home. These must include a description of the work, and information about who will carry it out. TCHA may apply conditions to any consent we give.

3.14 Right to Compensation for Improvements

Tenants who have a contractual commitment in their tenancy agreement may be entitled to compensation, where they have carried out certain types of improvement with written permission to an agreed standard. Payments are calculated using a formula that takes account of depreciation.

3.15 Contractors

TCHA will promote and encourage applications from maintenance contractors that reflect the community profile of the tenants in the areas it operates. Contractors applying to join the approved list will be subject to vetting arranged by the Chief Executive in accordance with TCHA's Financial Regulations, and formal approval by the Board.

We expect our contractors to comply with a code of conduct and operate in accordance with agreed standards for working in residents' homes, and to produce identification when visiting.

3.16 New development

Newly built homes owned or managed by TCHA will have a defects liability period during which the build contractor is normally responsible for correcting any faults identified within an agreed timescale. TCHA will identify work under defects when repair requests are received from tenants and inform them about the arrangements for completing the work.

4. Health and safety:

TCHA must ensure that its homes are safe, and will put in place service contracts for annual gas safety servicing, and servicing of fire equipment. We will also ensure that other legislative requirements to meet health and safety standards are arranged as part of our responsive and planned maintenance service.

4.1 Gas servicing

All properties with a gas supply will be inspected annually by a Gas Safe registered contractor, to provide valid safety certification. In addition, safety checks will be made when tenancies change as a result of a mutual exchange or void, and copy certificates will be provided to new tenants.

We will monitor our gas servicing programme to ensure its completion, and will take legal action if required to ensure that tenants provide access.

4.2 Electrical safety

All common areas of properties will be inspected every 5 years, and homes every 10 years. The electrical installation will be checked visually and tested by a NICEIC qualified electrical contractor and a Domestic Electrical Installation Periodic

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Inspection report will be provided, or (if rewired) a NICEIC Domestic Electrical Installation certificate.

4.3 Portable Appliance tests

Portable appliance tests will be carried out where required for properties provided with electrical equipment.

4.4 Fire equipment and Fire alarms

TCHA will ensure that fire equipment is regularly serviced in accordance with safety standards, and that fire alarms at schemes are tested and safety signage is in place.

4.5 Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors

We will ensure that all of our homes are fitted with hard-wired smoke detectors, and aim to provide carbon monoxide detectors for homes with gas appliances.

4.6 Water quality

Where TCHA has responsibility for communal water storage systems, we will ensure that contracts are in place for regular checks of water safety, testing and treatment, with records held on site for inspection in accordance with current regulations.

4.7 Asbestos

TCHA will comply with regulations relating to asbestos safety including the use of competent people to carry out the survey work, assessing risks, keeping an asbestos register, and keeping tenants informed.

5. Planned and cyclical maintenance:

The annual planned maintenance programme is drawn from the stock condition database, and is an essential part of maintaining homes in good condition. This programme is a cost effective way of arranging cyclical maintenance and the replacement or upgrading of building components. TCHA also aims to carry out a programme of annual inspections of its homes to help keep the stock condition data up to date, and to co-ordinate the completion of responsive repairs and planned work.

5.1 Energy performance certificates

Energy performance certificates are required whenever a property is built, sold, or rented. They are valid for 10 years and rate the energy efficiency of the property from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient). We will provide energy performance certificates to new tenants as part of the processing and letting of void properties, or following a mutual exchange.

5.2 Stock Condition

On completion of any improvement work carried out as part of responsive repairs, we will record the information on the stock condition database to feed into future planned maintenance programmes.

5.3 Environmental

TCHA will comply with environmental legislation and develop good practice as part of its maintenance service that aims to minimise the adverse impact of our business

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on the environment. This will include developing partnerships with our contractors and suppliers, and by influencing the behaviour of our staff and tenants to contribute to the achievement of energy efficiency and government targets to reduce carbon emissions.

6. Cost control and VFM:

TCHA will operate procedures for reviewing maintenance expenditure, and will compare our costs with other providers, to seek to contain costs and achieve value for money.

Financial controls apply to repair orders estimated to be above cost limits as set out in TCHA's financial regulations, and authorisation must be obtained before the order is placed. Competitive quotes or tenders may also be required for high cost repair work. Works costs will be benchmarked against the approved schedule of rates.

7. Resident influence and feedback:

TCHA is a community-based organisation that values feedback from our tenants to help develop and improve services. A satisfaction survey will be carried out for responsive maintenance. We will consult tenants about planned programmes, repair standards, and performance, and provide opportunities to involve tenants in service review.

8. Performance review and Key Performance Indicators:

TCHA monitors its performance in delivering the maintenance service by using performance indicators, and setting targets.

Regular meetings will be held to review overall contractor performance using performance information. A range of data is collated to support contractor performance review, including:

- Performance against target timescales by contractor
- Volume of contractor call backs
- Repairs satisfaction %
- Complaints
- Post inspections
- Gas servicing compliance
- Void turnaround time
- Expenditure against budget
- Cost per unit, block, scheme
- Response maintenance as a percentage of planned maintenance

Records and IT

Keeping accurate and comprehensive records of responsive maintenance work is essential to:

- Monitoring performance
- Providing an audit trail of action to respond to enquiries and complaints
- Analysing expenditure

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- Maintaining budgetary control
- TCHA will develop electronic and manual record systems to support the delivery of the maintenance service and cost control.

Accountability

The Housing Service Manager and the Finance and Resources Manager are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented within their service area.

References

Landlord & Tenant Act 1985 s11

Contains an implied covenant for the landlord to:

- Keep in repair the structure and exterior of the property
- Keep in repair and proper working order installations for the supply of water, gas, and electricity, and installations for sanitation, space heating and heating water

Housing Act 1985 s11

Extends the implied covenant to include common parts of buildings including lifts, communal lighting and boilers serving more than one home.

Defective Premises Act 1972

Gives the landlord a duty of care to prevent injury to people or damage to their property, which might be caused by a building defect.

Environmental Protection Act 1990 s79-82

Provides legal remedies for statutory nuisance where premises are 'in such a state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance'.

Occupiers Liability Act 1957

Gives the landlord a duty to ensure that all visitors will be reasonably safe when using the common parts for the purpose for which they were invited.

Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998

Landlords must:

- Ensure that only persons approved by the Health and Safety Executive carry out work on gas fittings
- Not to permit a gas appliance to be used if s/he knows or suspects it to be unsafe or inadequately ventilated
- Carry out an annual safety check by an approved person on pipework and appliances owned by them
- Keep records of all inspection defects, and actions taken, and make them available to tenants

Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 S2, 3, and 4

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

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The approved code of practice provides guidance on the management of basic requirements, risk assessment, inspection and prevention.

HHSR system (HHSRS)

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System is the risk assessment procedure for residential properties. It replaced the Housing Fitness regime on 6th April 2006 in England. HHSRS also replaced the Fitness Standard as an element of the Decent Homes standard. To be decent, all homes must be free of category 1 hazards.

www.gov.uk

Building Act 1984

This Act empowers the secretary of State to make building regulations regarding:

- Health, safety and welfare
- Conservation of fuel and power
- Preventing waste, undue consumption, misuse or contamination of water

The local authority enforces the building regulations.

BS7671 17th Edition

Sets out the requirements for the provision of NICEIC (National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting) electrical safety certification.

Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012

Sets out responsibilities for carrying out work in premises where there may be asbestos, including risk assessment and use of licensed contractors.

Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999

The regulations contain requirements to prevent the waste, misuse, undue consumption, or contamination of drinking water. Additional guidance is provided in the HSE's approved code of practice for water quality testing to control legionella bacteria in water systems.

The Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994 and the Plugs and Sockets etc (Safety) Regulations 1994

Requires that all electrical appliances or equipment supplied in the course of business must be safe, and underpins requirements for annual checks of portable appliances (Portable Appliance Tests or PA testing).

The Party Wall Act 1996

Covers the arrangements for notification to adjoining building owners about works to party walls.

The Construction Design and Management Regulations 2007 (CDM)

Applies legal duties to the management of health and safety on building sites.

Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended 2011)

Requires the prompt payment of bills throughout the supply chain for construction contracts, and sets out arrangements for settling disputes.

Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002

Sets out the requirements to consult leaseholders before carrying out major works or entering into long-term agreements for the supply of services.

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Housing (Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation)

The Housing Act 1984 redefined the definition of a house in multiple occupation. The management regulations place a duty on owners or managers with regard to safety, water and gas supplies, maintaining common parts, fixtures fittings and appliances.

Right to Repair

Compensation payable under the Right to Repair regulations (Section 96 of the Housing Act 1985 as amended by the Leasehold Reform and Urban Development Act 1993)

Right to Compensation for Improvement

Compensation payable under sections 97-99 of the Housing Act 1995 as amended by the Leasehold Reform and Urban Development Act 1993.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002

Sets out the legal requirements for working with hazardous substances, managing risks and record keeping.

Review

The Maintenance policy will be kept under regular review in line with changes in good practice and to take account of changes in the law. The policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

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