

8 Your repairs and improvements



Contents

Subject	Page
Reporting a gas leak.....	2
Reporting your repairs/Repairs Management Centre.....	3
Waiting times for repairs and improvements.....	4
Major repairs and improvements.....	4
Repair appointments	4
• Booking an appointment	4
• Materials and rubbish.....	5
• Inspections	5
Quality assurance	5
Noisy neighbours	5
Repair appointments	5
Code of conduct	6
Dogs : be a responsible owner	6
Photographs on-site	7
Chargeable repairs	7
Right to repair	7
When moving home	8
Responsibilities	9
Alterations to your home.....	11
• Help with mobility	11
• General alterations	11
• Decorating allowances	12

Subject	Page
General information	12
• Common repair problems	12
• Actions to take if electrical circuit breakers trip	12
• Electrical lighting problems	13
• Locks and fittings for doors	13
• Energy-saving light bulb disposal	13
• Gas appliances	14
• Solid fuel heating	14
• Communal and fire safety	14
• Smoke alarms.....	15
• uPVC window frames and doors	15
• Window opening restrictors	15
• Carpets	15
• Not sure about someone's identity	15
• Asbestos	16
• Damp and mould	16
• Laminate flooring	16
• For information	17

To report a gas leak or carbon monoxide alarm call - 0800 111 999

If you do smell gas, it is important you do the following:

1. Do not smoke, use a naked flame, or turn electric switches on or off
2. Turn off the gas supply at the meter
3. Open doors and windows to clear the smell of gas
4. Contact us immediately if you smell gas, or suspect there is a gas or carbon monoxide leak. You should call 0800 111 999 to report the problem

Introduction

This section is designed to provide you with useful information about your repairs service.

We aim to provide you with the best housing service possible by making sure your homes are regularly maintained and improved. It is important you retain this booklet and keep it in a safe place, and refer to it with your tenancy conditions and service standards.

This booklet will:

- Explain repair responsibilities (the council is responsible for some, but not all, repairs in your home)
- Tell you how to report a repair
- Provide you with advice on how you can maintain your home
- Help us to improve our service, by understanding your needs



**Repairs Management
Centre 0300 555 8283**

Monday morning is the busiest time for receiving repairs enquiries.

The Repairs Management Centre is open seven days a week to report your repairs - related problems. That means if you have a problem over the weekend you can report it immediately rather than waiting until Monday morning. Their telephone number is **0300 555 8283**.

If you require an emergency repair when our Repairs Management Centre is closed you can still contact our emergency teams using the same telephone number.

You can also report repairs online using our self-help system. The system is fully automated and very easy to use. Simply go to www.dudley.gov.uk/housing and click on 'report a repair' under Access to Services. Your repair request will be placed on the computer system within one working day. We recommend you still telephone **0300 555 8283** if it is an emergency repair.

You can also download a free app to contact the council about a multitude of services, including reporting repairs. To get the free app simply go to your app store and search Dudley Council and then download to your mobile device. The app is called - Dudley Council.

To report any repairs select 'housing repairs' from the app. You are then guided through option categories, enabling us to gather as much information as possible - you can even submit a photograph as a visual aid.

The app can also be used to report problems about potholes, dumped litter, faulty street lights, graffiti, anti-social behaviour and much more.

If you have digital television with interactive services, you can report your repair from the comfort of your living room. Reporting a repair is available 24-hours a day, seven days a week, via the interactive button on your remote control. If you would like to view the service online go to **www.lookinglocal.gov.uk** .

Tenants who are deaf/hard of hearing who need to report repairs

If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use our special text service to report your repair issues from your mobile phone. The number to text your message to is **07797 870353**. Please note this service should not be used by tenants who do not have a hearing impairment.

All calls are recorded and monitored to help us to continuously improve our service.

To help us to get it right first time we need your help!

We encourage customers to use our website to report new repairs. Our interactive reporting wizard will assist in reporting the repair and ensuring we send the right people to repair it on time. Please use our wizard at **https://repairs.dudley.gov.uk/cgi-bin/dmbcdif_launch.pl**

When you contact the Repairs Management Centre to report your repair, we need you to supply important information:

- Your name, address and a current telephone number (this should preferably be a mobile telephone number) in case we need to contact you
- As much information about the problem as possible, as this will help resolve the repair quicker (if you are reporting a problem with the loss of electric power,

lighting or locks - please see the 'general advice' section towards the back of this handbook)

- Are you calling about an existing problem? If so, please give dates of when the repair was last reported and the job number issued to you

When you report your repair details you will be advised of the repair timescales, if an inspection is required, and the job number for you to keep for future reference.

Waiting times for repairs and improvements

There are different maximum waiting times dependent on the nature of the repair. These include:

Type of responsive repair	Emergency	Routine
Response time	Within 24 hours	15 working days
What does this mean?	These are emergency repairs which are needed to avoid serious health and safety problems, or prevent serious structural damage to your home. This service is to make your home safe and a full repair may not be completed at this stage	A routine repair is when the problem does not seriously interfere with safety and security. Most minor repairs will fall into this category.
Example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total electrical failure • Burst pipes • Total communal lighting failure • Making property safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small areas of paving • Minor plastering • Door & window repairs • Guttering/down pipes • Electrical and gas repairs

Major repairs and improvements

Where possible, the council will group or batch large repairs or major improvement works into programmes. This enables the council to forward plan the work, improve efficiency and ensure the work is undertaken cost-effectively. The timescales will vary according to the type and scale of work to be undertaken, budget availability and any consultation periods.

The council also undertakes rolling planned improvements to its properties, e.g. double glazing, central heating, etc. We will contact

you before these commence to agree appointments and access.

The council, or our appointed contractors, will inform your neighbours of any potential disruption.

Repair appointments

Booking an appointment

When you contact us with a repair, we will agree an appointment with you for employees or contractors to visit your home. This is usually agreed with you when you call, but on occasions we may need to telephone you back.

Materials and rubbish

The council or its contractors will often need to deliver materials to your home in advance of the works starting. These will normally be left on your garden or secure area. Collections of rubbish generated during your repair works is normally collected in bulk within one working day of the repair being completed. If you have any queries regarding a material delivery or when any waste shall be collected, please contact the Repairs Management Centre on **0300 555 8283**

Inspections

If you report a problem which may require a major repair, we will normally need to send an inspector to assess the cause and nature of the fault. The inspector will then determine what work is required and will provide you with an indication when any work will be undertaken. Depending on the nature of the work we may only be able to advise approximate timescales. However, we will contact you again in the future, with more accurate timescales, when these are known.

Quality assurance

We aim to provide you with the best value-for-money repairs service possible. As part of our continuous improvement programme, we carry out inspections on a random selection of completed repairs to check standards of work and customer satisfaction levels. We will arrange a convenient appointment with you to visit and carry out the inspection. These inspections are important as they enable us to measure our quality and performance, helping us to continually improve the service.

Your feedback is also very important to us. If we contact you to discuss your repair, or send you a questionnaire, please provide us with your views as this will help us to improve your repairs service in the future.

Noisy neighbours!

When we undertake work to someone's home, an empty property or within a

communal area, it may involve major improvements. Occasionally this may also involve some disruption to neighbours and noise at times. We will always try to keep this to a minimum, complete the work as quickly as possible and keep you informed of progress.

Repair appointments

General access

Council employees, or our approved contractors, may need access to your home, not only to carry out repairs reported by yourself, but also to carry out inspections, improvements, service gas appliances, and other safety essential checks.

In extreme circumstances, we may need to gain access to your property without giving any warning. This will only happen if we need to protect your, and your neighbour(s) home, from serious damage i.e., in the event of flooding, or suspected gas leak.

We promise to provide you with reasonable notice when we need to enter your property, but in return we expect you to allow access when required. If you unreasonably refuse us access or you do not respond to access requests for any annual gas safety inspections, we may need to take legal action to gain access. It is therefore very important to allow us access when we need it, which can be arranged for a mutually convenient time.

Repairs and inspection appointments

It is very important that you let us know as soon as possible if you are unable to keep the appointment for our operative to visit your property. Simply call 0300 555 8283.

Missed appointments cost the council a lot financially and lost opportunities to carry out work at other properties.

During 2015, almost 8,000 repair visits were lost due to customers breaking their appointments, or repairs no longer being required. These wasted journeys cost our tenants more than £110,000 - money which could have been spent on urgently needed

improvements. £110,000 would replace more than 30 kitchens/bathrooms/install more than 350 double-glazed windows. If you need to re-arrange or cancel a repair please let us know as soon as possible.

If we have visited your home and found that you have gone out when you were expecting a visit we will leave a postcard asking you to contact us on **0300 555 8283** to make arrangements for a new appointment. Your visit/repair will have been cancelled and you will have to contact us to rebook.

Code of conduct

We expect council employees and contractors to be courteous and helpful when providing you with your service - you are, after all, our customers. They should:

1. Wear and produce identification - it is important you check their identity before you allow access to your property, to ensure your safety
2. Wear their standard uniform
3. Use dust sheets to protect your belongings
4. Make reasonable efforts to protect your belongings
5. Carry out their work in a neat and tidy manner, and keep levels of noise to a minimum
6. Act responsibly at all times. They should not: smoke, play music or use bad language, when in your home
7. Remove all repair-related rubbish from inside your home once the work has finished
8. Be polite and courteous to you and your guests
9. Comply with our health and safety requirements

Our teams are here to provide you with a quality service and they should be professional at all times. We ask you to also treat them with respect. Our employees have the right to leave your property, and any incomplete repair, if they encounter threatening behaviour, intimidation or discrimination. Such behaviour could

ultimately result in legal action to evict you and your family from your home, as this is in breach of your tenancy agreement.

Thank you for not smoking

Our staff visit many homes where residents are smokers. We understand that you have the right to smoke in your own home, but we ask you not to when a council employee, or one of its contractors, is visiting.

All of our employees have been instructed not to smoke within your home to help protect your health. If you do not refrain from smoking within the room our operatives are working, they have the right to leave your home, and any incomplete repair, if you still refuse when asked.

If you are interested in quitting smoking, why not visit the NHS website at **www.nhs.uk/smokefree**. The site lists free local NHS support services. You can also telephone the free NHS Smokefree National Helpline on **0300 123 1044**.

Dogs: be a responsible owner

Dogs are a joy to own but it is important you are a responsible owner as they can prove to be dangerous. It is against the law to let a dog be out of control, even within your own home and could lead to prosecution.

Under the tenancy conditions, 4.9: You, or anyone living with you, must not keep any animal(s) that are unsuitable for your home or garden because of their type or number. Any animal(s) must not do anything which causes, or is likely to cause a nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to any person residing, visiting or otherwise engaged in a lawful activity within the locality. You will be responsible for providing and maintaining any fencing specifically required to control your animal(s).

Dudley Council has a 'No dogs by the front door' policy. Whenever you open your front door your dog should not be allowed to come with you. When you take your dog out for exercise they should be on a lead when you leave the property and while you are on the street.

If one of our employees encounters a problem with a dog(s) in your property they have the right to withdraw their service and enforcement action could be taken.

Dogs must always be fully secured in a room, garden or suitable pet cage when Dudley Council officers or contractors attend and owners will need to take into account if the dog is capable of escaping from this area (for example some dogs can jump over a gate or open a door). Dogs should be familiar with this arrangement so that they are not unduly stressed when placed there.

Photographs on-site

As part of our continuous improvement to our housing services have issued our operatives with mobile devices to help us to evaluate our service to you, our customers.

The new technology helps us to make our service more efficient by improving our management of the workflow of jobs and help us to control our costs.

You will see our operatives routinely taking photographs of repairs before and after the work has been done. Don't worry, these photos will only include the repair and not any wider shots of your property, or anyone who is in the room. You will be fully covered by the Data Protection Act and these photos will only be viewed by officers or contractors responsible for managing the quality of our service.

We introduced this scheme to:

- monitor the quality of the work undertaken, reducing the need for routine inspections. Inspections will not take place unless the tenant specifically requests a visit - saving our customers this inconvenience
- to collect information which will help us with our asset management - the state of our properties, materials used, etc
- provide photographic evidence that the work has been undertaken and allows us to monitor the standard of the workmanship to ensure consistency.

Chargeable repairs

Most tenants maintain their home to a high standard. That is why we feel it is unfair for all tenants to pay towards other people's neglect or intentional damage of the council's property. Where appropriate, we will charge for repairs which have not resulted from fair wear and tear. If tenants do not consider the charges as fair they have the right to appeal against any costs imposed. Please remember, our repairs operatives and contractors are not responsible for raising charges and they are not authorised to waiver any costs.

If you wish to employ a contractor to undertake any work on your behalf, we suggest that you visit the 'Fix A Home' scheme administered by Trading Standards. This information can be accessed online at www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/your-council/trading-standards/fix-a-home All we ask is that the repair be carried out within a reasonable time and within a reasonable condition.

In serious cases, in addition to charging tenants for the cost of repairs, we may also take action to evict for serious breaches of our tenancy conditions.

Where appropriate, we may waive charges which might otherwise be made if it is fair and equitable to do so and we may offer support to tenants to prevent the council incurring similar costs again, for example an older resident who loses their keys regularly and asks for the locks to be changed - we may be able to arrange for a neighbour, friend or relative to keep a set of keys and to keep a watchful eye for any problems.

If you would like to see a list of the current charges please visit the council website at www.dudley.gov.uk .

Right to repair - legal duty

The council has a legal duty to carry out some repairs within a certain time after you have told us what needs to be done. These are called qualifying repairs and relate to certain small urgent repairs which may

affect your health, safety or security for example:

- unsafe power or lighting sockets, or electrical fittings
- toilets which do not flush.

For further details please go to

www.gov.uk/repair-council-property
or contact the Repairs Management Centre and ask for details.

Right to repair

Although we are responsible for most repairs to your property, we are not liable for everything. As a tenant of one of our properties the following are your responsibility and you may have to pay the cost of this work being carried out, e.g.:

- If you, or one of your visitors, has caused damage (e.g. breaking a window) or been negligent (e.g. locking yourself out of your property)
- If the repair is the consequence of decorating, the casing on a gas appliance, uPVC window or door, or electrical equipment

- If it is the consequence of unauthorised alterations/improvements being made to your property
- If it is the consequence of lifting your laminate flooring.

Some of your equipment is maintained by specialist contractors. Examples are central heating, community alarm systems, and communal TV aerials.

- If you experience any problems with such equipment you must report them to us in the first instance and not directly to the supplier. If you contact the supplier direct you may have to pay any charges, unless the job has already been reported by us and the contractor has left a card requesting you to contact them directly.

When moving home:

- You must ensure that all rooms, your loft, gardens, outbuildings and any cellars have been cleared of items not supplied as part of the tenancy and left tidy
- You must pay for any damages and any outstanding repairs which are your responsibility

Responsibilities

We are responsible for some, but not all, repairs to your home. The following guide outlines who is responsible for key items.

Item	Council	You	Exceptions
Airing cupboard doors and shelves	✓		
Boiler	✓		
Bath	✓		
Bath panel (replace)	✓		
Blocked sinks and bath wastes, and toilet wastes		✓	OAP/disabled
Chimney (inc. pots and covers)	✓		
Chimney sweeping (solid fuel heating only)	✓		
Clothes poles and rotary driers		✓	Communal areas
Communal areas to flats	✓		
Communal doors and windows	✓		
Communal footpaths, walls and gates	✓		
Communal laundry equipment	✓		
Curtain rails/batons		✓	OAP/disabled
Decoration and painting (internal)		✓	Following replastering to large areas eg whole walls or ceilings. Decoration vouchers may be provided as an alternative to decorations.
Door bell		✓	Communal door entry or intercom systems
Doors (including frames, fixtures and fittings)	✓		
Door locks (faulty or sticking)	✓		Lost keys
Down-pipe (soil/rainwater)	✓		
Drainage (inc blockage)	✓		Where Severn Trent responsibility
Driveways and hard standings		✓	Access to council garages
Electric heating (provided by the council)	✓		
Electric wiring (inc sockets and switches)	✓		
Fences between properties		✓	Privacy panel, onto open land and right of way
Fences - to avoid falls from height	✓		Where less than one metre
Fire grates and surrounds (provided by the council)	✓		
Fire, gas or electric (provided by the council)	✓		
Fuse in plug		✓	
Garages	✓		Tenant's own garage
Gas central heating and water heaters (provided by the council)	✓		
Gas piping	✓		Mains to property and meter
Gates front		✓	OAP/disabled
Gates (existing side providing security)	✓		
Glass (doors and windows)	✓		
Grass cutting		✓	Communal areas
Handrail (external)	✓		

Item	Council	You	Exceptions
Immersion heater (provided by the council)	✓		
Kitchen and worktops (inc. sinks)	✓		
Kitchen (adjusting doors and drawers)		✓	OAP/disabled
Lifts	✓		
Light bulbs (inc. fluorescent strip-lights)		✓	OAP/disabled
Light bulbs and security lights supplied by the Council	✓		
Light bulb holders (inc. pendants and ceiling roses)	✓		
Lighting in communal areas	✓		
Lock change (lost or stolen keys)		✓	
Outbuildings (provided by the council)	✓		
Painting (external)	✓		
Pathways to provide access to your home	✓		
Patios and garden paths		✓	Communal areas
Pipe-work - frozen (please contact RMC if you require advice on how to stop pipes from freezing)		✓	OAP/disabled and gas boiler
Plaster finishes to walls and ceilings	✓		General preparation for decoration
Plugs/chains for sinks, wash basin and bath		✓	OAP/disabled
Porch or canopy (provided by the council)	✓		
Radiators	✓		Painted finishes/surfaces
Roof (inc. tiles)	✓		
Sanitary ware - all	✓		eg WC pans, basins, etc
Satellite dishes & TV aerials		✓	Communal areas
Shower unit (provided by the council)	✓		Hoses and shower heads
Shower screens/curtains or rails		✓	Adaptated wet rooms
Skirting board	✓		
Smoke detector (mains or sealed battery)	✓		Replacement battery type
Solid fuel central heating (provided by the council)	✓		
Taps (installed by the council)	✓		
Toilet seat		✓	OAP/disabled
Ventilators/fans provided by the council	✓		
Veranda/conservatory provided by the council	✓		
Walls (structure to home)	✓		Tenants' own garden walls
Water supply (inc. cold/hot water tanks and pipes)	✓		
Windows (inc latches and hinges)	✓		Condensation: please refer to the website for futher information

Exemptions: The definition of 'disabled': Household where the tenant is in receipt of a Personal Independence Payment (PIP), as defined by The Department for Work & Pensions.

Inaccurate information: If inaccurate, or fraudulent information is provided when requesting a repair - this may result in charges being applied.

Where pipes or radiators are leaking, you should make reasonable efforts to control the leak i.e. by using a bowl or towels, until the council attends your home. The council will not reimburse you for losses incurred if you have not taken reasonable steps to minimise any damage.

If you are unsure where your stop tap is please contact the Repairs Management Centre for advice, before you need it in an emergency.

Alterations to your home

Help with mobility

You can place a request for an adaptation (or report a repair) through the Repairs Management Centre or online at www.dudley.gov/housing

If any repairs are being undertaken, which you need completing in a specific way to meet your needs, then notify your housing manager to allow them to consult with our occupational therapist to see how we can help.

General alterations

If you want to make any changes (including improvements) to your home, you must first gain our permission. If you do not you may be charged for any costs for replacement repairs needed and/or we may ask you to put the property back into its original condition at your own cost. We may also take legal action against you for breach of your tenancy conditions. Please contact your housing manager for details.

Examples of alterations to properties include:

- Changes to kitchen or bathroom fixtures and fittings, including shower installations
- Knocking down walls (inside your home or garden)
- Changing fixtures/fittings relating to water, gas, or electricity (remember to always use qualified and accredited trades people for any gas or electrical work)
- Erecting sheds/greenhouses/other structures

- Constructing a drop kerb and hard standing
- Installing CCTV
- Erecting conservatories, porches, or decking
- Installing external security lighting
- External painting
- Electrical light fittings
- Installation of laminate flooring (all properties)
- Solar/PV panels

Just because you need to ask permission does not mean we will automatically turn you down! Permission will not be given if we feel the changes will make your property unsafe, cost us extra money to maintain in the future, or reduce the property's value.

Any alterations will need to comply with planning requirements and building regulations if applicable and charges may apply.

When undertaking an alteration you must not use asbestos, Artex or any similar textured coating on walls or ceilings.

You may be entitled to some compensation for improvements you have carried out yourself when you leave your home.

Often these schemes are offered free for residents by third parties, but in these circumstances they may have a long contractual duration over a number of years and there are often situations where the council can be liable for additional costs in the future. If this is the case the request is likely to be refused.

A request to install Solar PV panels is an alteration to a tenant's home, and permission should be sought from the housing manager.

Often these schemes are offered free for residents by third parties, but in these circumstances they may have a long contractual duration over a number of years and there are often situations where the council can be liable for additional costs in the future. If this is the case the request is likely to be refused.

Decorating allowances

Tenants entitled to receive a decorating allowance for their property will receive B&Q decorating cards to use at designated outlets.

A property liaison officer or operations officer will advise you of the value of vouchers you may be entitled to, depending upon the condition of the property.

Housing officers will evaluate the work completed to ensure vouchers are being used to improve your home. Housing services have the right to reclaim any monies which have not been used towards decoration and a charge may be issued if necessary.



The vouchers can be exchanged for paint, wallpaper, decorating tools, brushes, etc.

General information

You can access a range of instruction manuals for most appliances and equipment within your home via our website. Go online to

www.dudley.gov/housing

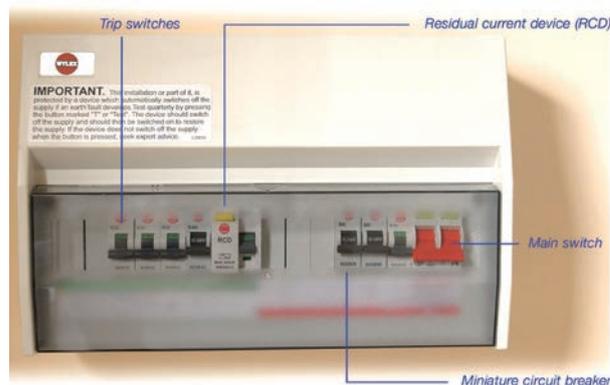
Common repair problems:

No power to your home

If your sockets and lights do not work, check with your neighbours to see if they still have power. There may be a local power cut - if so contact your electricity provider. If you have a credit or token meter, check to see if the meter is in credit.

12

The council cannot override these meters. You will need to top-up your token or credit cards, before power can be restored.



No power to your sockets, but lights still work

Modern fuse boards have safety devices called RCD's (Residual Current Device). These are very sensitive and will trip if a fault develops with an appliance, e.g. a washing machine, iron or kettle.

1. Check your fuse board, as most are now fitted with trip switches. You should notice one of these trip switches is in the OFF position.
2. Turn off the MAIN SWITCH, normally this is a different colour to the others and it will be at the far end of the fuse board.
3. Unplug your appliances, particularly the ones you were using when the power went off.
4. Ensure all small trip switches and the RCD switch are in the ON position. Then turn ON the MAIN SWITCH.
5. All sockets should now be working. If not, double check all your appliances and extension leads are unplugged and repeat point 4.

If you followed this, but still cannot solve the problem, please call us and we will re-instate your power, but we will not rectify any faulty appliances or extension leads that do not belong to the council.

No lights, but your sockets still work

Modern fuse boards include circuit breakers that can trip when a bulb blows. This does not necessarily mean there is a fault.

1. Check your fuse board, as most are now fitted with trip switches. You should notice one of these trip switches is in the OFF position.
2. Simply switch the circuit breaker back into the ON position. Your lights should now be working.

Please take extra care when changing any light bulbs. We advise you to change bulbs during daylight hours and ensure the switch to the light is turned off. If in doubt turn OFF all the electricity to your home, by using the MAIN SWITCH on the fuse board.

Remember, the Repairs Management Centre is able to help with any repairs enquiries problems you have - just telephone 0300 555 8283 to report your problem.

Electrical lighting problems:

- **If you have no power, or lights within your property, or within a room:**
 - Check whether there are other properties in your area which are affected (e.g. your neighbour)
 - Check whether one of your appliances could be faulty, causing problems on the circuit
 - If you have a credit or token meter, check there is still adequate credit
 - Check your fuse or trip switch
 - If a light problem - try a new light bulb, or fluorescent fitting, in case they have reached their life expectancy
 - Determine which circuit is affected - is it the lights or sockets?
- **If your light or light switches are loose, or broken:**
 - Tell us which room it is in
 - Tell us what type of light fitting it is
- **If your lamp holder is loose, or broken:**
 - Tell us which room it is in
 - Let us know if there are any sparks or smoke
 - Notify us of whether it is a pendant, batten or fluorescent light

Locks and fittings for doors (includes garage doors):

- **If you have locked yourself out of your property, or have lost your key:**
 - Check whether your family or friends have a spare key - in case of emergencies
 - Let us know whether you are an older person or registered disabled
 - Tell us which door it is
 - Tell us what kind of lock it is
 - There may be costs incurred for the service provided
- **If your lock, or latch, is not working:**
 - Tell us which door it is
 - Tell us what kind of lock it is
 - Tell us how many locks are located on the same door
- **If you have lost your key to your garage, or lock up:**
 - Check whether you have a spare set
 - Let us know how you lost your keys
 - Tell us what kind of lock it is
 - There may be costs incurred for the service provided

NB there may be a charge for lost keys when locks need changing

Energy-saving light bulbs - disposal

Energy-saving light bulbs can last up to 10 times longer than traditional light bulbs and save you money on your electricity bills as a consequence.

The traditional bulbs are very inefficient and are being removed from the market.

Because energy-efficient light bulbs contain a small amount of mercury you need to be careful during their disposal.

- Do not throw them away in your normal rubbish or recycling bins - they need to go to a recycling centre. Telephone **0300 555 2345** or visit **www.recycle-more.co.uk** if you want to find out your nearest location

- If a bulb breaks don't panic as the small amount of mercury is unlikely to do any harm. If a bulb breaks open your window for 15 minutes and leave the room. This will allow clean air to circulate. Collect the broken light bulb up using kitchen paper (not a brush, vacuum, etc) wearing rubber gloves. Put broken pieces into a plastic bag and seal it. Wipe the area down with a damp cloth. Take to a recycling centre.

Details of recycling centres for energy-saving light bulbs can be found at **www.recolight.co.uk** .

Please note: If you are visiting a Dudley Council refuse site you must drive - no pedestrians are permitted as they are at risk on site.

Gas appliances

As your landlord, we have a legal responsibility to ensure your gas appliances are safe and pose no hazard. We inspect and service them by providing you with an annual free service.

It is your responsibility, under your tenancy agreement, to allow gas contractors access into your property to carry out a gas safety check and service.

The authority has a legal obligation to carry out visits to council owned properties which have gas meters, appliances and pipework installed, as part of an annual rolling service contract. These visits are to ensure council owned gas central heating boilers; fires, and tenants own gas appliances are working safely and maintained as per the appliance manufacturers' instructions.

It is important that you allow contractors into your homes to carry out the work when your appointment has been booked. Non access is very expensive for the authority both in terms of financial cost and lost time for the operative. If any tenant persistently does not allow access, enforcement action will be taken against them to recover costs incurred or possible eviction if the property is seen as a potential hazard.

We ask you not to decorate the casing of any gas appliances you have, as this can result in toxic fumes being released - risking your health and making it unsafe. If you do decorate any of the casings - any replacement costs will be recharged to you.

Where gas central heating has been supplied, you may have a vent in an external wall or window. You must always keep this vent clear for your own safety, a lack of air flow could result in a build up of carbon monoxide.

When the gas safety check for your home is due we will send you a letter with a fixed appointment which will state AM or PM. The letter will include details of how to contact the contractor to enable you to change the appointment if necessary. We carry out servicing Monday to Friday from 8am - 8pm and on Saturdays from 8am - 5pm.

If you are unable to keep an appointment due to unforeseen circumstances you are asked to ring **01384 286080** as soon as possible to arrange a more convenient time, or email

serviceappointments@phjones.com .

When a gas fire or the flue/chimney can no longer be economically repaired, the appliance will be removed and an electric fire and surround will be installed free of charge.

Solid fuel heating

Some tenants have chosen to keep their solid fuel heaters or open fires and the council undertakes an annual safety inspection on these. Where tenants have removed gas or electric fires and are using hearths to burn solid fuel, without the council's agreement, there is a serious danger of death through carbon monoxide poisoning or fire. If your solid fuel heating system has not been inspected by the council within the last year, stop using it immediately and contact the Repairs Management Centre on **0300 555 8283**.

When a solid fuel appliance can no longer be repaired in accordance with current building regulations, the appliance will be

removed and an electric fire and surround will be installed free of charge.

Communal and fire safety

Fire exits must be kept clear and closed and not wedged open. Communal areas should also be kept clear of anything which may hinder any means of exit in the event of a fire. If any fire fighting equipment is found to be missing or damaged or fire doors do not close properly, please contact the Repairs Management Centre as soon as possible. Communal areas are decorated with special fire retardant paint. You must never attempt to decorate these surfaces yourself. If you see others doing this please report it to us.

Testing smoke alarms

It is important that you test your smoke alarms every week as they could save your life.

Those supplied by us have 10-year batteries or are wired into your home.

If you have not had an alarm installed by Dudley Council, or find that it is not working, telephone **0300 555 8283** to arrange an installation. They are usually installed as part of the annual gas safety check.

If you have installed your own alarm you should test it every week, replace the battery every year and twice a year open the unit and gently vacuum the sensors.

uPVC window frames and doors

We ask you not to paint (or apply any other kind of coating to) any uPVC window frames or doors as this can be a fire risk. If you do decorate any of the casings - any replacement costs will be recharged to you.

Window opening restrictors

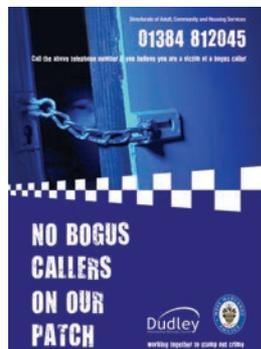
When the council installs a replacement window most will have an opening safety restrictor installed which helps prevent small children from opening the window too wide. If any safety devices become faulty or

small children regularly occupy your home and your windows do not have opening restrictors fitted, please contact the Repairs Management Centre, who will arrange for a safety restrictor to be installed free of charge.

Carpets

When we carry out any work in your home, we will use dustsheets to protect your carpets or floor coverings. If the work is extensive, it may be necessary to remove some carpets. If you have a carpet which has been professionally fitted e.g. includes underlay and edging gripper, we will arrange for these carpets to be removed and refitted. If you have foam-backed carpets, linoleum (lino), or laminate flooring fitted, you will need to arrange for this to be removed and refitted at your expense. We can do this for you, but the council will not accept responsibility for any damage which may occur and we will not attempt to relay any laminate flooring.

If you're not sure about someone's identity



When one of our employees, or a contractor, calls at your property check their identify card (which includes a photograph) and if in doubt do not let them in!

Telephone the Repairs Management Centre on **0300 555 8283** to check whether someone is scheduled to visit. Genuine visitors will understand and wait until you have checked.

If you are worried that bogus callers are operating within your area - please notify us through our dedicated telephone line. The bogus callers hotline is **01384 812045** and is available 24-hours a day, every day of the year and is open to any concerned Dudley Council resident. This

communication will allow us to notify any likely victims, warning them to be more watchful when answering their door. This initiative is in partnership with West Midlands Police.

A few general rules to keep you safe in your home:

Do:

- Use a door chain and spy hole, if you have one
- Ask callers for their identity card
- Refuse entry to a stranger or someone you are not sure of
- Ring us, or the police, if you are not sure about the caller

Don't:

- Believe someone who is claiming to be an official, without proper identification
- Give someone cash on the promise that they will do work in the future
- Keep more money in the house than you need to

If you think there is asbestos in your home

Most homes are likely to have some form of asbestos-containing materials internally or externally, but when in good condition they pose no harm and are far safer left alone.

If you plan to do any work which may disturb any material which you think could contain asbestos (e.g. textured coatings, protective boards by boilers/heaters, cement sheets or pipes) please contact the Repairs Management Centre on **0300 555 8283** for advice, or refer to our website to view our leaflet about asbestos.

If you have a problem with damp or mould

As a result of cooking, washing, drying clothes and occupancy, all homes suffer with some condensation, but this is easily reduced by keeping your home warm during any cold spells and ensuring it is well ventilated by keeping vents clear, using extractor fans and venting tumble driers outside.

If your home has mould growth because of condensation problems you have encountered, products can be purchased at DIY stores, as well as special preventative paints.

Steps to reduce condensation include:

- Provide adequate ventilation and air flow
- When moisture is entering the air (e.g. when cooking or taking a bath) close room doors and open a window
- Do not cover radiators to dry clothes
- Do not use portable paraffin or bottled gas heaters

For further details call the Repairs Management Centre on 0300 555 8283 who will send you a copy of our information sheet, or go to **www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/housing/#**

The council's website also includes an informative video to assist you in minimising condensation and mould growth.

For further details call the Repairs Management Centre on **0300 555 8283** who will send you a copy of our information sheet, or go to **www.dudley.gov.uk**

The video about condensation can be viewed online at

www.dudley.gov.uk or on You Tube at **www.youtube.com/user/dudleymbc**

Laminate flooring

You need permission from your housing manager to fit laminate flooring.

- There may be noise implications, which affect your neighbours
- If approval is granted, use the non-adhesive (inter-locking type) as this is easier to remove
- You are responsible for the uplift and refitting as the consequence of any necessary repairs

If you live in one of our flats, we ask you to pay particular care to your neighbours and those who live beneath your property, when using laminate flooring.

If you install laminate flooring and it is later found to be causing noise disruption - we have the right to withdraw our permission. You will be responsible for the removal of the laminate flooring.

If you install laminate flooring without permission you may be asked to remove it.

For information

Dudley Council's website

www.dudley.gov.uk includes a wealth of information about all council services and events taking place in the borough.

If you require any assistance with regards to the tenants' handbook or would like to

request an interpreter, large print version, or audio tape, please contact Dudley Council Plus on **0300 555 2345**.

The photos used in this publication are for illustrative purposes only. All information included in this handbook was correct at the time of printing.

Publication date: March 2017

Approved  by tenants