

Tenant Support During Improvement Works

Title: Tenant Support During Improvement Works	Approved: Executive Board On 02/12/2021	Effective from: 16/12/2021	Next review: 01/12/2023
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Review Comments			N/A

Aim

To make sure Council properties are maintained to both the Decent Homes standard and the NK Home standard by working with tenants to prevent the refusal of programmed improvement works.

To enable the annual Capital works programme to be delivered as planned.

To provide a set of guidelines to act as a framework for officers to support tenants to enable works to be completed.

To provide a menu of tools that officers can use to encourage, help and support tenants who may otherwise choose to decline improvement works to their homes.

Scope

This policy applies to all programmed Capital and Revenue planned maintenance works to Council properties, to support tenants not to decline improvement works at their property.

Definitions

Decent Home Standard: A standard set by Government to ensure social housing is in a decent state of repair and has a reasonable level of modern facilities and services.

NK Home Standard: The adopted standard as approved by the HRA Business Plan based on component age; a higher standard than the Decent Homes Standard.

Refusal: Tenant declines home improvement/s to the Council property they live in

Omission: It is found that the improvement work is no longer required e.g. the kitchen is newer than was expected; due to the repairs service having already completed the work required as a repair; the property has benefited from a disabled adaptation; or the tenant has completed the work at their own expense.

1. KEEPING STOCK WELL MAINTAINED

- 1.1. The main driver for encouraging tenants to have improvement work completed is to ensure that the housing stock is well maintained and meets the Decent Homes standard as set out by central Government. The Council sets its own, higher, standard to ensure that Council properties remain decent.
- 1.2. Additionally, improvements keep the stock as energy efficient as possible, helping to keep tenants energy bills down, reducing carbon emissions and keeping properties safe and warm.
- 1.3. Some improvement works are essential to maintain the fabric of the house and keep tenants safe and secure.
- 1.4. Occasionally, when officers visit a property prior to works being carried out, it is found that the improvement work is no longer required and is therefore omitted from the programme. For example a kitchen is newer than was expected; or the repairs service may have needed to replace a boiler already; or the property has benefited from a disabled bathroom adaptation; or the tenant has completed the work at their own expense. The programmed work is then omitted and Council records are updated accordingly.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Each year a programme of improvement works is outlined for the Council's housing stock and each year a few tenants decline to have the works completed. A number of different reasons are cited for not wanting to have improvements. For example:
 - 'The old one is still alright'
 - 'I'm happy with what I've got'
 - 'I can't cope with the upheaval'
 - Tenant is elderly and can't cope with intrusion to their routine
 - Work being done in winter (e.g. window replacement/central heating)
 - It will leave a mess
 - Cost of re-decorating and making good is prohibitive
- 2.2. A Tenant Liaison Officer and Building Surveyor work with the tenant and aim to establish if there is an underlying issue that may prevent the works going ahead. They can work with the tenant to find a reasonable solution with the use of a number of tools to enable the works to go ahead. This strategy leads to more works being completed than would otherwise be so. However, some tenants still refuse programmed improvement works.
- 2.3. Whilst there are a number of reasons that it would be inadvisable for contractors to do the works at that particular time, the reasons noted at 2.1 are deemed unacceptable. This policy aims to outline what can and cannot be refused and identify valid and acceptable reasons for refusal.

2.4. The Council will only accept refusals for work in exceptional circumstances, and will not allow a tenant to say no without a valid reason. However, officers will work to help and support the tenant throughout the works and aim to mitigate the inconvenience as far as is possible.

2.4.1. Ultimately the Council may take the decision to complete essential works if there is not a valid reason for the refusal. The tenant has the right to appeal against the officer decision through the Housing Appeals Process.

2.5. A few tenants are not well enough to go through the disruption. For example, they:

- Are medically unfit or going through a prolonged illness
- Are having ongoing and / or significant medical treatment
- Have a disability that means they have special needs
- Have a disability and have nobody that can help them to prepare for the works
- Caring for someone who is terminally ill in the house
- Have just come home from hospital to recuperate
- Very recently bereaved

(The Council may ask for a letter of confirmation or support from a Doctor or Support Worker if deemed necessary. The Council will cover this cost if the letter supports the tenants medical concerns.)

The list above is not exhaustive and there may be other exceptional circumstances arise. The Council will take these into account and use discretion as to whether works should commence and will work with and support tenants as necessary.

2.6. An assessment form with set criteria will be used to assess medical fitness and requirements of the household, in order to aid officers to make decisions about whether the work should go ahead. Every effort will be made help and support the tenant to have the works completed.

3. CATEGORY OF WORKS

3.1. There are a number of different Capital and Revenue work programmes. Some cause minimal intrusion into the lives of tenants and others can cause whole house upheaval and are very intrusive.

3.1.1. Present programmes include:

- **Kitchens** – Intrusive in one room plus storage required for kitchen items elsewhere
- **Bathrooms** – Intrusive in one room.
- **Whole heating system** – Very intrusive. All rooms affected
- **Electrical improvements** – Very intrusive in all areas of the house
- **Boiler replacement** – Small area of intrusion
- **Windows** – Limited intrusion. Can be a problem in colder months
- **Doors** – Limited intrusion. Can be a problem in colder months
- **Roofing** – Possibility of a little disruption of garden and or parking (re-instating gardens after scaffolding is contractors responsibility)
- **Driveways** – Very limited intrusion but may affect parking for a short time.

- **External painting** – Only a problem in colder months to have the door open while paint dries
- **Insulation upgrades** – Intrusiveness is dependent upon type of insulation
- **Estate improvements** – Very limited intrusion

3.1.2. From time to time there may be other different work programmes required as part of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to ensure the stock is well maintained and meets modern living requirements. The Council will use these same guidelines and tools to ensure that these works can also be completed.

3.2. The capital improvement works above have been categorised essential (E) and non-essential (NE) and whether they are internal or external, and intrusive or non-intrusive (below). The level of support and incentives to enable works is dependent upon how intrusive the works are to complete and/or the level of support required for the tenant.

External	Doors (E) Windows (E)	Roofs (E) Driveways (NE) Estate improvements (E) External painting (E)
Internal	Kitchen (NE) Bathroom (NE) Central Heating System (E) Electrical (E)	Boiler replacement (E) Insulation (E)
	Intrusive	Non-intrusive

4. OPTIONS FOR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

4.1. In order to keep the stock well maintained and keep refusals down to a minimum, a toolbox of measures and incentives has been devised. These tools can be used to encourage tenants, who are refusing works, to help and support to have them the works completed. The level of help and support will depend upon whether the work is essential, if the work is in the internal / intrusive category.

4.2. A budget will be made available to officers to enable them to put the necessary measures in place to reassure and support tenants who are shown to need it.

4.3. Officers liaising with tenants will have authority to use the tools identified below where deemed necessary to facilitate works and support tenants. The list of tools is not exhaustive and officers will aim to address any other support requirements should they arise where necessary. Decisions about any further actions required to support tenants will be taken in liaison with managers.

Category	Menu of tools available to be available and used as required and necessary to enable works to be completed while supporting tenants to have works completed	
	Essential Works (E)	Non-essential Works (NE)
Internal / intrusive Kitchen (NE) Bathroom (NE) Central Heating System (E) Electrical (E)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of contact • Regular/daily communication • Liaison with family/friends to help out • Flexibility • Provision of packing boxes • Support to pack/move items • Choices (ie chased electrics and pipework) • Alternative daytime accommodation • Meals Delivered • Reasonable minor works included • Storage on or off site • Decoration scheme • Decorating allowance • Kennelling for dogs • Respite care • Skip (for decluttering prior to works) • Decanting (see policy) • Testimonials/viewing of already completed works • Deep cleaning following works if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of contact • Regular/daily communication • Liaison with family/friends to help out • Flexibility • Provision of packing boxes • Support to pack/move items • Choices (design, colours) • Alternative daytime accommodation • Meals Delivered • Reasonable minor works included • Storage on or off site • Decoration scheme • Decorating allowance • Kennelling for dogs • Respite care • Skip (for decluttering prior to works) • Testimonials/viewing of already completed works • Deep cleaning following works if necessary
External / intrusive Doors (E) Windows (E)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of contact • Regular/daily communication • Flexibility (seasonal) • Choices (door colour) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of contact • Regular/daily communication • Flexibility
Internal / non-intrusive Boiler replacement (E) Insulation (E)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of contact • Regular/daily communication • Liaison with family/friends • Flexibility • Provision of packing boxes • Support to pack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of contact • Regular/daily communication • Liaison with family/friends • Flexibility • Provision of packing boxes • Support to pack
External / non intrusive Roofs (E) Driveways (NE) Estate improvements (E) External painting (E)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation (estate improvements) • Point of contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation • Point of contact

4.4. Where tenants need to have regular access to facilities or short term storage and there are no local alternatives to use, access to a caravan or similar would help to deliver the programme of works.

4.5. Sometimes officers come across people who have gone above and beyond to help the Council out, to no benefit of their own, e.g. neighbours who have allowed us to put a skip on their property for their neighbours work to be done. As a caring and supportive Council a small reasonable value voucher can be given as a thank you / compensation.

5. OTHER FACTORS

5.1. During initial consultation for improvement works all tenants are advised to have Home Contents Insurance. Should accidents or damage occur the Council will consider how the damage occurred e.g. contractor error or if it was an accident. Tenants are always advised to have home contents insurance as they may need to claim on their home insurance.

Responsibilities

Decent Homes – To keep homes in a good state of repair

Make best use of resources including finances and housing stock

Supporting procedures

This Policy also links to:

- NKDC Tenants own home improvements
- NKDC Decoration Vouchers (Voids)
- NKDC Handyman Service
- NKDC Discretionary Payments
- NKDC Appeals Process
- NKDC Decoration Scheme
- NKDC Voids policy
- Decent Home Standard

Monitoring

A record of refusals is kept to ensure that retrospective improvements can be made when a new tenant moves into the property. Where the improvement is omitted from the programme property data is updated to note true and correct data.

Consultation

Tenant Liaison Panel has been consulted through two workshops on content and considerations for the policy, and will be consulted on the draft policy

Communication

The At Home magazine will be used to convey the standards within the policy to tenants and the policy will be made available on the corporate website.

Signed:

(Leader of Council/Deputy Leader)

(Chief Executive/ Deputy Chief Executive)