Chargeable Repairs Policy

Repairs that are not the landlord's responsibility

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You are advised that a printed version may not be the latest available version. The latest version, which supersedes all previous versions, is available on the Brighter Places Policy Index Sheet. Those to whom this policy applies, are responsible for familiarising themselves with the latest version and for always complying with the policy requirements.

Should colleagues require any reasonable adjustment to allow for engagement with this document please contact the policy lead

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1. Policy Statement / Purpose

This policy outlines our approach to undertaking repairs to our homes which are not the landlord's responsibility. These repairs are known as 'chargeable repairs' as the cost for completing these repairs will be charged to the tenant and not paid for by Brighter Places.

This policies application is limited to buildings, communal spaces or grounds which are owned and/or managed by Brighter Places.

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions are used:

- Tenant – the individual/s who signed the tenancy agreement for the home
- Resident – anyone authorised to live in the home by the tenant.

2. Commitment

To ensure transparency, fairness and trust with customers, this policy has the following commitments:

- **To be clear and open**
  - We will be clear about tenant responsibilities for repairs, during the lettings and exchange process and when visiting a tenant's home
  - We will provide information in the tenant handbook and online about our tenant's responsibility for repairs. These will be available to all tenants
  - As soon as we identify that a repair is chargeable, we will explain the tenant's options and estimate the cost for us to undertake the works.
- **To be consistent and fair**
  - We will identify chargeable repairs using consistent criteria that are fair to all tenants
  - We will record all chargeable repair costs on a tenant's record
  - We will use consistent processes for obtaining payment from tenants for chargeable repairs
  - We will charge a standard fee for all chargeable repairs of the same type, even if in practice, the contractor's charge to us for an individual repair may be different
  - We can pursue payment for a chargeable repair within reasonable timescales where we can evidence that the tenant was aware that the repair was chargeable
  - Where a former tenant has unpaid chargeable repairs costs, we will pursue this in line with our Income Management policy.

- **Communication and engagement**
  - We will maintain open lines of communication with tenants regarding chargeable repairs, including the timelines and costs
  - We will ensure tenants can raise any concerns about any charges levied and/or the service provided. These will be managed through our Complaints Policy
  - Detailed records of all communications, agreements and payments related to chargeable repairs will be kept.
- **Person Centric Approach**
  - We will listen to tenants and take into account individual circumstances, this could include:
    - Vulnerable people in the household
    - Security and safety of the home
    - Any Anti-Social Behaviour or similar issues which are impacting the household
    - Any safeguarding concerns
    - Any financial hardship being experienced by the tenant
    - Any arrears owed to Brighter Places
    - Any other issues brought to colleagues' attention which they deem to be important
  - In circumstances where upfront payment may cause additional financial hardship, consideration will be given to allow residents to pay for their chargeable repairs through an agreed payment plan
  - In exceptional circumstances, a decision may be made to waive or reduce the charge levied.
- **Quality assurance**
  - To ensure high standards of work and the use of quality materials for all repairs undertaken, post repair inspections maybe be carried out on a sample basis
  - Customers will be asked to confirm that the repair has been completed
  - Where a tenant has raised concerns about the quality of the work completed, a post inspection will always be carried out.
- **Regular reviews**
  - The policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fair, transparent and effective
  - Tenant's will also be engaged as part of the review process to ensure the customer experience is understood and any learnings considered.

3. Linked Documents

This policy aligns with the following policies and procedures:

- EDI Strategy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Responsive Repairs Policy
- Empty Homes Management Policy
- ASB and Hate Crime Policy
- Clear Communal Spaces Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Mutual Exchange and Assignment Policy
- Out of Hours Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Children Policy
- Tenancy Sustainment Policy
- Aids and Adaptations Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Income Management Policy.

4. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

This policy must be delivered in line with the following legislative requirements:

- Housing Act 1985
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 2004 including the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- The Homes (Fitness for Habitation) Act 2018
- Equality Act 2010 (UK)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

5. Policy Detail

5.1. What is a chargeable repair?

Brighter Places is committed to maintaining high-quality homes. Our Repairs Policy sets out the repairs that we will undertake, there are some instances where tenants are responsible for undertaking repairs or maintenance.

Chargeable repairs are those that do not fall under Brighter Places responsibility and can include:

- Repairs which have arisen because of accidental or deliberate damage caused by the tenant, their household members including pets, or visitors
- Loss of items provided to the tenant at the property sign up. This includes replacement of keys or fobs
- Repairs resulting from neglect or misuse of the property
- Repairs for unauthorised alterations made by the tenant
- Maintenance of external areas, including gardens, that are not kept in a reasonable condition
- Removal of waste or debris at the end of a tenancy or which is causing a health and safety violation during the tenancy
- Repairs which the customer asks us to undertake as they do not feel able to do these themselves, this could include for example, unblocking sinks, filling small gaps in walls, fitting lightbulbs, resetting electrical trip switches or changing boiler programming.

Chargeable repairs can arise at any point during a tenancy, including at the tenancy end.

5.2. Roles and responsibilities

Customer Service Director

The Customer Service Director has overall responsibility for the implementation of the chargeable repairs policy, insuring it is implemented effectively across the organisation.

Head of Housing and Head of Repairs and Compliance

The Head of Housing and Head of Repairs and Compliance are responsible for ensuring the relevant training, guidance and support are provided to colleagues to implement this policy. These roles are also responsible for the monitoring of the policy to ensure that our actions align with it.

Customer Services Directorate

The Customer Service Directorate are responsible for ensuring tenants understand their responsibilities, keeping an effective audit trail of contact and management of chargeable repairs payments. The Directorate is also responsible for providing advice and support for tenants. The Directorate will also manage through the Complaints Process any concerns raised by the tenant relating to the quality of works or the cost they incurred.

Duty Manager (Customer Services Directorate)

The Duty Manager is responsible for making a decision on whether a tenant will be offered a payment plan for their chargeable repairs and in extreme circumstances, whether the charge will be voided. The Duty Manager will liaise with the Customer Service Team and must ensure that a person centric approach is taken.

The Head of Property and Compliance

The Head of Property and Compliance has overall responsibility for providing and maintaining the schedule of rates for the cost of works, providing quotes for any non-standard works and ensuring that the repairs are completed in a timely manner to a high quality.

Surveyors

All Brighter Places Surveyors are responsible for the delivery of any chargeable works, including providing any quotes where these fall outside of the schedule of rates. The Surveyor is also responsible for ensuring the effective delivery of the works within a timely manner and for undertaking any post inspection of works to ensure it is delivered to the right quality and to the customer's satisfaction.

Repairs Contractor

Repairs Contractor' manages the repairs service, and this includes responding to requests from residents/tenants for repairs to their home. Repairs Contractor is responsible for ensuring that any chargeable repairs are referred to Brighter Places Customer Service Team for payment before confirming a repair appointment with the tenant. The only exception to this is out of hours, where this must be referred to the On Call Manager to approve this.

On Call Manager

The On Call Manager will decide whether to authorise Repairs Contractor to undertake chargeable repairs outside of working hours.

IT Team

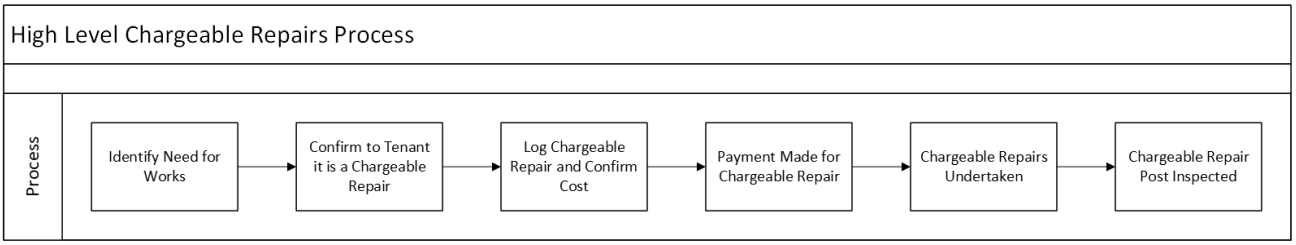
The IT Team will design reports to ensure Customer Service Directorate can understand the performance in this area.

Tenants

Tenants will be responsible for promptly reporting any damage or required repairs, and making prompt payment for any charges incurred.

5.3 Policy detail

A high-level overview of the Chargeable Repairs process is below:



- **Identify the need for works**

A chargeable repair maybe identified when the tenant or a member of their household contacts Brighter Places staff or Repairs Contractor directly to report a repair. This could also arise when an operative or contractor working on Brighter Places behalf attends the tenant's home to undertake work to their home, or by a Brighter Places colleague who has visited the tenant's home.

- **Confirm to Tenant it is a Chargeable Repair**

Details of which repairs are chargeable are found in the Tenant Handbook. Where a chargeable repair is identified, the customer must be advised of this at the earliest opportunity.

The cost of works will be standardised, on a pre-set fee, for each type of repair and a £25 administration fee will apply.

The tenant must be advised that they also have the option to arrange for the works to be completed by another organisation/contractor. The tenant must be informed that if they chose to do this, they must ensure that the contractor is suitably qualified and has the relevant insurances in place. Any damage caused by the contractor will be charged to the tenant if Brighter Places is required to put this right.

Brighter Places or any organisation working on our behalf, will not recommend any tradespeople or organisations. Advice can be provided on the type of trades or skills that is required to undertake the work where this comes from someone who is suitably skilled to diagnose this.

Health and Safety Works

There may be instances, where repairs are required which are chargeable, but they pose a health and safety risk to people or property. In these instances, Brighter

Places will undertake the works to make things safe and secure. This is to ensure that the work is completed quickly, and that the appropriate standards and regulations are complied with. Examples of where this could occur is for example, broken windows which will be boarded up, structural damage to walls, damage to roofs, unsafe trees, repairs which may have disturbed asbestos or fire damage. Where this occurs, the costs will be charged to the tenant to make the property safe. Brighter Places will then engage with the tenant to discuss remedying the remaining works and the options available to the tenant to do this.

Where works are considered to impact the structural integrity of the building or will impact the building regulations, Brighter Places will undertake these works.

Criminal Activity

If criminal activity has caused the need for the repair, we will undertake these works and pay for them, providing the resident/tenant provides us with a relevant crime reference number.

Where there is sufficient evidence that damage has been caused by a third-party consideration will be given by the Head of Housing on what action can be taken to recover these costs directly from the organisations or individuals directly that caused the damage.

End of Tenancy

Where chargeable repairs are identified as part of the end of tenancy process, the Repairs and Voids Supervisor must provide the tenant with an itemised list of works that must be completed before they move out. This should also include the cost we will charge if we need to complete these works after the tenancy has ended. In this instance, the tenant can request that we undertake the works for them either before they move out or afterwards. Payment must be made for these works as soon as possible.

Where the tenant does not undertake the works prior to the tenancy end, the cost of these works will be charged to the tenant and the Income Management Policy will be followed to recover the monies owed.

Out of Hours

Chargeable repairs may be identified out of normal office hours. In this instance, Repairs Contractor must triage the repair need and determine whether it is an emergency and/or whether they should attend to make safe. In these instances, Repairs Contractor should notify the customer that the works are chargeable and that the Customer Services Team who will contact the customer when Brighter Places office hours resume.

If the repairs are not deemed an emergency or have a requirement to make safe, but Repairs Contractor feels that there is a valid reason for the works to be completed

out of hours, they should contact the Out of Hours Manager who will decide on whether to authorise the works. This could include for example, a resident who has lost the keys to their property.

- **Log the Chargeable Repair**

Repairs Contractor will be provided with details of the repair either by the resident/tenant or by a representative of Brighter Places.

Ian Wiliams will log the repair as chargeable on the repairs system but will not book the job or allocate it until authorisation is given by Brighter Places to proceed.

Where a tenant/resident contacts Repairs Contractor directly, Repairs Contractor will advise the resident/tenant that the works are chargeable and that the works cannot be booked in until they have been paid for. Repairs Contractor will transfer the resident/tenant (if by telephone) to the Customer Service Team and if notification is in any other form, Repairs Contractor will notify the Customer Service Team of the repair request, the charge and the details of the resident/tenant.

Health and Safety Works

If any chargeable repairs are raised, which pose a health and safety risk to people or property that requires urgent attention, Repairs Contractor must attend to assess the situation and make safe. In these circumstances, Repairs Contractor will also notify the Customer Service Team who will notify a Repairs Surveyor and the Duty Manager.

- **Take Payment**

The Customer Service Team will seek payment from the resident/tenant to confirm the cost of the works and take payment from them.

Where the tenant says that they are unable to make the payment, the Customer Service Team will gather information from the tenant on why they are unable to pay. This will be discussed with the Duty Manager and a decision will be made on whether to allow a payment plan. This decision must be person centric and consider a range of issues, including but not limited to:

- Any vulnerable people in the household
- The type of repair being requested and how it impacts the security and safety of the home
- Any Anti-Social Behaviour or similar issues which are impacting the household
- Any safeguarding concerns
- Any financial hardship being experienced by the tenant

- Any arrears owed to Brighter Places
- Any other issues brought to colleagues attention which they deem to be important.

If a payment plan is not offered or if a tenant refuses to engage in a payment plan, the Duty Manager must be informed. The Duty Manager will decide whether the chargeable repairs are of an urgent nature and should be carried out immediately. This could be for example, if a tenant has lost their keys. If the repairs are not urgent, such as a damaged but usable internal door, the Housing Officer can make an appointment to visit the tenant to discuss how to resolve the situation.

Where the works have been paid for by the resident/customer, the Customer Service Team will provide them with a receipt for payment in writing. Where a payment plan has been agreed, this will also be confirmed in writing to the tenant.

The Customer Service Team will confirm to Repairs Contractor that authorisation is in place for the chargeable repairs to be undertaken.

If a decision not to carry out the works is made, the Customer Service Team must advise Repairs Contractor of this who will then cancel the job. The Customer Service Team will advise the resident/tenant that the works have been cancelled and that they will not be undertaken until payment is made.

- **Complete the chargeable repair**

Repairs Contractor will undertake the repair in line with the agreed service level agreements. If when attending the property, the level of work required is greater or less than originally identified, Repairs Contractor must report this to the Customer Service Team.

Where the works are significantly greater than anticipated, a decision will be made with the Duty Manager and Repairs and Voids Surveyor on whether the repairs will be undertaken or an appointment made for the Repairs Surveyor to attend and cost up the works. The Customer Service Team will engage with the tenant to agree a way forward. Any health and safety issues must be addressed.

Where the works are significantly smaller than originally identified, the cost of works will be recalculated and a refund provided to the resident/tenant who made payment.

- **Chargeable repair post inspected**

Where appropriate, the Homes Directorate may post-inspect the works to ensure that it has been delivered to a high quality. This could be part of a sampling approach, due to the complexity or cost of the works or because of a tenant complaint about the quality of work completed.

5.4 Learning from Chargeable Repairs

We will undertake a regular review of the type of chargeable repair being undertaken, the level of payments made in advance and the adherence to payment plans. This information maybe cross referenced with other internal data sets such as level of arrears, ASB, tenancy length, number of repairs etc to identify any trends or themes that can be used to adapt our approach.

Additionally, the type of chargeable repairs being requested, may result in proactive information sharing with customers on how to complete low level repairs which are the tenant's responsibility to help reduce the cost for tenants.

6. Training Requirements

- All operational colleagues and key partners such as Repairs Contractor, will be required to be trained on this policy
- Training requirements will be incorporated into the Brighter Places training matrix.

7. Monitoring and Review

- The ongoing application of this policy is monitored by the Customer Services Director to ensure that it remains relevant, up to date and accessible to the relevant audience
- The collection of chargeable repairs will form part of the Customer Service and Income Management key targets and performance indicators
- The policy will be reviewed at least every 2 years.
- Tenants, colleagues and partners may be involved in giving feedback on the effectiveness of this policy, leading to amendments where appropriate
- Complaints received regarding this policy will be used to inform any changes to our approach.

8. Data Protection

Any personal data created or used in the application of this policy must be done so in line with the Brighter Places data protection policy and privacy notices.

9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Where required, reasonable adjustments will be considered to support residents/tenants, colleagues and partners to engage with this policy. Please speak to the policy owner for assistance.

10. Summary Roles and Responsibilities

Activities	Board	CEO	PGC	ARC	Exec	Managers	All staff	HR	Gov
Owner of the policy					**B**				
Monitoring & review of the policy					X	X			
Approval of changes to the policy					X				
Responsible for policy implementation					X	X			
Addressing issues in the implementation of the policy						X			
Version control of live policy									X
Training of colleagues						X		X	