

## Scrutiny Review of Communication of Tenant Responsibility Repairs

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**Date of Exercise:** January 2025 to April 2025

## Introduction

As part of the suite of information presented to the Scrutiny Partners at their meeting on 11th June 2024, ForHousing had requested a scrutiny exercise on 'Communication in Tenant Responsibility for Repairs' at this had been an issue continually raised by Community Voice.

## Scope of the Exercise

The scope of the exercise was to:

- Assess ForHousing's approach to communicating tenant responsibility for repairs generally and at point of reporting
- Assess ForHousing's approach to communication about recharges
- Analyse reports of recharges in relation to tenant damage
- Carry out a customer journey map of a repair raised as a possible tenant responsibility, through inspection to end result
- Make recommendations to improve communication in relation to tenant responsibility for repairs and recharges

## Methodology

Desktop work was carried out looking at the following information:

- ForHousing website
- Repairs and maintenance procedure
- Tenancy agreement
- Reasonable adjustment guidance
- training presentation to Customer Connect Hub team
- hints and tips emails to Customer Connect Hub team
- complaints information
- survey feedback responses
- recharge dispute report

Focus Groups were held with:

- Income Team
- Customer Connect Hub

Mystery shopping was carried out through the Customer Connect hub.

Scrutiny were unable to identify tenants who had reported repairs that were confirmed as tenant's responsibility but used feedback from customer satisfaction surveys and complaints information to gather feedback from the wider tenant base.

## Findings

### Summary of Findings

Scrutiny were unable to get a list of tenants who had reported a tenant responsibility repair. The hints and tips documents advise to ensure the contact is logged and focus group with Customer Connect Hub confirmed that the contact is recorded on QL. Scrutiny feel that there is a need to be able to report on these repairs, as:

- It would support the identification of possible issues being faced by the tenant, including domestic violence, if repairs are being reported on a regular basis but not being completed. (Scrutiny understand that Customer Connect Hub will see the history of repairs

and repair requests when dealing with a new enquiry and that colleagues are aware of how to raise any safeguarding issues identified)

- It would support identification of properties that may be going into a state of disrepair where repairs are often reported but not carried out by the tenant
- it would allow ForHousing to identify if there is an issue with a particular 'tenant responsibility repair' or a particular area that may need action

Scrutiny found the list of repairs a tenant may be responsible for through a tab on the left of the main repairs page. However, there was no mention of tenant responsibility in the main body of the text.

The tenancy agreement states that tenants will be responsible where there is neglect or wilful or negligent damage. This is also stated on the website. However, Scrutiny are aware that some items will be a tenant responsibility where there was no neglect or wilful or negligent damage which makes this statement misleading.

There is no mention on the website of the issues potentially covered by a historical tenancy agreement, such as Villages. Focus groups demonstrated that the Customer Connect Hub staff are aware of this.

Some of the items on the website are misleading or vague and need further explanation, for instance:

- fireplace parts – it is not clear if this is a fireplace ForHousing have installed in which case would it be a tenant responsibility repair?
- gas fittings and fixtures – it gives the impression that a tenant can do this themselves and does not mention the need for a gas safe engineer to do it – Scrutiny we re-assured by the focus group that this advice is given by the Customer Connect Hub but found this advice not to be given during a mystery shop
- joinery – it is not clear what joinery a tenant is responsible for

Some items, such a toilet seats are mentioned as a tenant responsibility repair in the policy but not on the website or in the tenancy agreement.

Customer Connect Hub have a list which is more extensive and gives clearer detail.

In the repairs procedure it says that home improvements that have not been approved will be tenant responsibility. Scrutiny understand that ForHousing do not maintain home improvements even if permission has been granted.

Scrutiny felt it would be useful to mention in the link to Salford Handyperson Service that it is means tested.

The training and hints and tips documents are really clear and very useful for supporting staff to support tenants. Furthermore, Scrutiny found the development of the Reasonable Adjustment Guidance as a positive move by ForHousing and were pleased to see that repairs are mentioned as an example.

It is clear from the training documents and the focus groups that ForHousing staff are passionate about delivering an excellent customer service even where a repair is deemed to be the responsibility of the tenant. This was further evidenced in mystery shopping of the Customer Connect Hub.

Where a tenant's responsibility for a repair is disputed, an inspection is raised but there is no way of demonstrating how often this happens, for which repairs, and whether the dispute was upheld following an inspection - Scrutiny acknowledge that recording of this is being investigated by ForHousing.

Scrutiny noted from focus groups that the Customer Connect Hub and/or the tenant are not always notified if a repair is not carried out due to it being a tenant responsibility. This means the Customer Connect Hub have to deal with the follow up, when a tenant chases.

Scrutiny were pleased to note that the same service should be given to tenants who report a repair out of hours. Scrutiny were not in a position to mystery shop this currently but will do so in the future.

Scrutiny were pleased that Home Contents Insurance is promoted both through the Customer Connect Hub and on the website where this might cover tenant responsibility.

The Income Team are advised of a responsive repair and send the invoice to the tenant. Scrutiny were concerned that it can take around 6 months for the information to be sent to the Income Team which means a tenant can have work done and receive a recharge over 6 months later.

### Recommendations and actions

Scrutiny have made the following recommendations which will be delivered through the identified actions.

Recommendation	Proposed Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
As well as logging tenant responsibility repairs as a contact on QL, Scrutiny recommend enabling these to be assigned a category to support reporting.	Review with ICT & Connect Hub Managers the possibility of an action being added to QL advising tenant responsibility repair to enable reports to be run	Kelly McAteer/ Steve Stafford	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
All communication relating to tenant responsibility repairs to be consistent (tenancy agreement, website, repairs policy). This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consideration to the wording of neglect or wilful or negligent damage to make it clear to tenants</li> <li>all home improvements that are carried out by the tenant will be their responsibility</li> </ul>	Soften language on website and change wording if recharges are applicable  Change wording on this point to "all home improvements carried out by you such as 'x, y, z', will be a tenant responsibility should they fall into disrepair" - Asset team will need to provide us with some examples to quote in the above.	Luke Atherton  Wording to be supplied by Assets Team	13 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
Once all communication is consistent the website should be	Make changes to widget that displays the current	Luke Atherton/ Assets Team	13th June 2025

<p>interactive so that further explanation can be given on each area of tenant responsibility repairs, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gas fittings and fixtures – examples of these can be given and the need for a Gas Safe Engineer to carry out the works can be highlighted</li> <li>• joinery – further explanation/ clarity and examples of what joinery tenants are expected to carry out</li> </ul>	<p>information on the responsibilities page so more information can be included. For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gas fittings and fixtures – examples of these can be given and the need for a Gas Safe Engineer to carry out the works can be highlighted</li> <li>• joinery – further explanation/ clarity and examples of what joinery tenants are expected to carry out</li> </ul>		
<p>As well as a tab for tenant responsibility repairs, there should be mention in the main body of text that some repairs are the responsibility of the tenant.</p>	<p>Add an introductory paragraph at the top of the responsibilities page or somewhere else on the repairs page, with potential wording below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's important to us that your home is safe and well-maintained. There are many types of repairs we are responsible for, but did you know there are some repairs you will need to take care of yourself?</li> <li>• You can see the list of repairs ForHousing will take care of in your home, and some repairs that you are responsibility by clicking here &gt; XXX</li> </ul>	<p>Luke Atherton</p>	<p>30<sup>th</sup> May 2025</p>
<p>There should be information on the website that reminds tenants that some repairs are potentially covered by a historical tenancy agreement, e.g. Villages.</p>	<p>Add sentence onto the page</p>	<p>Luke Atherton</p>	<p>30<sup>th</sup> May 2025</p>
<p>Scrutiny felt it would be useful to mention in the link that the Salford Handyperson Service is means tested.</p>	<p>Following communication for SCC, it is apparent that not many of our tenants would meet the criteria for the</p>	<p>Luke Atherton</p>	<p>Completed</p>

	service and the link has now been removed		
Scrutiny to be kept updated on the introduction of recording/ reporting on tenant responsibility repair inspections.	When inspecting tenant responsibility repairs these will be updated on QL once functional	Kelly McAteer/ Steve Stafford	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
System to be put in place to ensure the tenant and the Customer Connect Hub are notified where repairs are not carried out.	Review adding cancelled – tenant responsibility repair to operative PDA. This would then be pulled through on cancelled repairs reports	Kelly McAtter/ Steve Stafford	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
Further promotion of the benefits of/ need for Home Contents Insurance.	Agreed to ongoing promotions	Kayley Correy	Ongoing

Scrutiny would like to thank all staff who took the time to support this exercise.