

Local Authority Housing - Improvements and Alterations Policy



Summary

This policy outlines our approach for managing requests from tenants or leaseholders wishing to make improvements and alterations to their home.

Effective date

1 October 2024

Review

We will review this Policy every 3 years or when there has been an update to legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational changes.

Version

Version 1.2

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1. Scope

The policy covers all council Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings where there is a secure tenant, leasehold properties, and shared ownership.

Any reference in this policy to, 'we', 'our' or 'us' refers to Portsmouth City Council, Local Authority Housing.

Any reference in this policy to 'tenant', 'customer' or 'resident' refers to Portsmouth City Council, Local Authority Housing secure tenant, leaseholder or shared owner, depending on the lease.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Outline our approach for managing requests from tenants or leaseholders wishing to make improvements and alterations to their home, including any equipment or vehicles purchased by tenants that may require alterations to the dwelling or common parts of blocks of flats or sheltered schemes.
- Ensuring we meet our statutory and legislative obligations.

3. Approval criteria

Prior written approval must be sought before any improvements and alterations are undertaken by a tenant or leaseholder.

Permission will not be unreasonably withheld, if the proposed improvements or alterations impact on any neighbouring property the building repairs manager will consult with the neighbours before giving any permission for works to proceed.

If the request is approved, the relevant building repairs manager will write to the tenant, or the leasehold & commercial team will write to the leaseholder and:

- give conditional permission which is non-transferable with the tenant being the sole recipient
- outline the conditions, e.g. conforms with legislation such as planning or building regulation approval or health & safety requirements as necessary, tenant makes certificates and guarantees available, dates when any work must be completed by.
- confirm maintenance responsibility based on the council's normal repair responsibility and scope of service, i.e.: council, e.g. showers, property entrance doors, windows, kitchens, structural improvements to tenant e.g. aerials, satellite dishes.

In addition, when approved the relevant building repairs manager will set up a repair order to record the agreed scope of works and update the repair order throughout the project as required.

If the request is declined, the relevant building repairs manager will write to the tenant or the leasehold team will write to the leaseholder and:

- decline permission
- state the reasons, e.g. makes the property unsafe, reduces property's value, makes it harder to let, future maintenance costs excessive, work will impact on fire safety of the block of flats

4. Completion of improvements and alterations

Once the work is completed the building repairs team is responsible for ensuring:

- the tenant or leaseholder used suitable qualified and competent tradesperson
- work is inspected and approved.
- the tenant or leaseholder has provided copies of certificates and guarantees (Tenant responsible items must be maintained by them and removed when the tenancy ends. Tenant is responsible for any reinstatement works after removal).
- We can accept building maintenance responsibility when applicable.

Once the work has been approved and accepted the building repairs team manager will:

- ensure tenancy or leaseholder records are updated.
- complete the repair order with appropriate details.
- update the stock database as appropriate.
- confirm acceptance and repair and maintenance responsibility in writing to the tenant or leaseholder.

5. Unapproved or non-conforming improvements and alterations

If a tenant or leaseholder makes alterations without gaining permission in advance from their building repairs team manager or completes the works without meeting the conditions in the approval, the alterations may be the subject of a requirement to reinstate the dwelling to its previous state, at the tenant's or leaseholder's cost.

The relevant building repairs manager will assess the works and may grant retrospective permission although this can't be guaranteed. If permission is denied, then the tenant or leaseholder must reinstate the dwelling.

In addition, if the unapproved or non-conforming alterations make the dwelling unsafe or the relevant building repairs manager assesses that the tenant or leaseholder is not capable of reinstating the work undertaken satisfactorily, we

reserve the right to instruct a contractor to make the property safe or reinstate the property.

These costs will be recharged to the tenant or leaseholder.

6. End of Tenancy

At the end of the tenancy the outgoing tenant may be eligible for compensation for the residual life of any improvements they made to their home during their secure tenancy under this policy. We will maintain until uneconomic to do so, at which point it will replace with standard materials.

The details of what is eligible, and the compensation criteria are contained in [The Secure Tenants of Local Authorities \(Compensation for Improvements\) Regulations 1994](#) and will be assessed by the relevant building maintenance manager when requested.

7. Your responsibility

Tenants must seek prior written approval from the building repairs team manager who will ensure any requests for proposed improvements and alterations is evaluated.

Leaseholders must seek prior written approval from the leasehold services team who will ensure the relevant building repairs manager evaluates any requests for proposed improvements or alterations to the structure that we are responsible for. Charges will apply and dependent on the work to be carried out.

Before work commences the tenant or leaseholder must provide details of:

- drawings of proposed changes, if appropriate.
- specifications of work and materials to be used.
- details of who will undertake the work.
- planning or building regulations permission, if required.
- completed acceptance of conditions declaration form.

During the work, the tenant or leaseholder is responsible for ensuring:

- entire cost of works is borne by the tenant or leaseholder.
- planning, building regulations and health & safety is complied with.
- gas and electrical works are carried out by competent tradesperson.
- records are kept, including receipts for work, certificates and guarantees.
- any damage caused to the property during the execution of the works is to be made good at your expense and to the satisfaction of us.
- all works must be carried out by competent persons to our satisfaction.

- you must inform us that the works are complete as we may carry out an inspection.

8. Your voice

We provide tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise the Landlord Strategies, policies and services including the Resident Consortium together with repairs and maintenance focus groups.

If you would like to be included in future resident engagement focus groups and would like to know how to get involved, please contact us for more information:

You can contact our team by:

- Email: housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- Phone: 02392 834835
- Website: visit the [Resident engagement and community resources on our website](#)

9. What have we done to make sure this Policy is fair?

We completed an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to consider the positive and negative impacts this Policy may have on people with protected characteristics under the [Equality Act 2010](#). This Policy should have direct and positive equality and diversity impacts.

10. Regulation and legislation

We recognise the variety of legislation, and we will continue to monitor relevant legal guidance. The list below reflects some of the existing legal framework and relevant publications:

- [The Secure Tenants of Local Authorities \(Compensation for Improvements\) Regulations 1994](#)
- [The Building Regulations 2010](#)
- Planning Legislation

11. Related documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Local Authority Housing Landlord Policies, Strategies and Reports - [Housing policies, strategies and privacy notices](#)
- Tenancy Agreement / Leasehold Agreement

12. How to feedback

If you have any questions around the policy or would like to know more about its application, please contact the relevant service in the first instance.

You can get this policy in large print, braille, audio or in another language by contacting your Housing Office. More information is available [translation, interpreting and audio information](#).

Compliments:

To help us provide the best service we can. We would like to hear customer views on the services that they use. If the customer is pleased with a member of staff or service, please let us know.

- Telephone: 02392 606383
- Email address: HNBLandlordComplaints@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Complaints:

If a customer is unhappy, they can refer to our LAH (Local Authority Housing) Landlord Complaints Policy.

- Online complaint form at [Make a housing complaint](#)
- Telephone: 02392 606383
- Email address: HNBLandlordComplaints@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- [Landlord Complaints Policy](#)

Housing Ombudsman Service

If a customer is unhappy, they can contact the Housing Ombudsman Service for advice and guidance at any time.

- Online complaint form on [the Housing Ombudsman Service website](#)
- Telephone 0300 111 3000
- [Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code](#)