

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE POLICY & PROCEDURE

1. GENERAL STATEMENT

1.1 English Rural Housing Association is committed to maintaining its stock to a high standard, meeting regulatory and legal requirements whilst offering a quality repairs and maintenance service to residents. This is achieved through a responsive, major and cyclical programme designed to balance time, cost and quality. Key corporate strategies, specifically English Rural's business plan and asset management strategy, direct the provision of the repairs and maintenance service. This policy sets out the general principles of the repairs and maintenance service, and sits alongside other key policy documents relating to the service and also wider corporate objectives including standing orders and financial regulations; and also, policies covering sustainability, equality, diversity, health, safety and business continuity.

2. SERVICE DELIVERY

2.1 A separate policy exists covering how repairs and maintenance services will be procured. English Rural relies on a network of external contractors to provide all aspects of its repairs and maintenance work. The service is managed and controlled by directly employed repairs staff who operate a dedicated repairs telephone line; tenants are also able to report repairs via other routes including in person and online. In addition to taking repairs directly during office hours, the service also benefits from an external out of hours facility which handles emergency calls during these times.

2.2 Communication is recognised as being critical to delivery of an effective repairs and maintenance service, particularly regarding responsive repairs. For this reason English Rural has dedicated staff to take responsive repairs calls, who are then also responsible for passing details to contractors and following up subsequent actions. This method helps to establish both ownership and clarity. Appointments are made directly by contractors within 48 hours of the order being placed, to meet the tenant's convenience so far as reasonable. In the case of responsive repairs all tenants will receive a copy of the works order sent to the contractor for review and information; this will provide contractor details, the response time required and a description of the work required; the order will also contain a repairs satisfaction slip which tenants will be asked to complete and return for monitoring purposes. A comparable system operates with the planned maintenance programme, with residents notified of works and empowered to monitor.

2.3 Internal and external surveying services are used to direct and inform more complex repairs or larger scale contracts. English Rural also recognises the importance of maintaining stock condition information for business planning and informing longer term strategy. It will therefore aim to update stock condition data on a regular basis with detailed surveys and analysis at least every five years.

2.4 The repairs and maintenance service provided by the Association aims to minimise inconvenience of appointments and implement the principles of 'Right First Time' service provision. The Association will recharge appointments missed by tenants in accordance with the Rechargeable Repairs policy operated by the Repairs and Maintenance Department.

2.5 The repairs and maintenance service will primarily be managed through English Rural's IT management software and by providing training and improving data quality and collection. English Rural is committed to developing this area further. The potential improvements of operating an effective and efficient repairs and maintenance service solely through the IT management software are recognised and where possible future reviews and work will look to incorporate any parallel data management systems or programmes into this. The IT management software also enables an interface between different service areas, including tenancy management, enabling improved tenant profiling to identify specific requirements and needs of vulnerable groups.

2.6 The Tenant's Handbook details repairs and maintenance responsibilities for the Association and the tenant and is subject to periodic review in consultation with residents. A separate rechargeable repairs policy is operated by the Association to cover this area.

2.7 To maximise efficiency and budgetary control, English Rural has sought to develop a co-ordinated planned programme to deliver cyclical and major works. Stock condition data is used to inform this programme which looks to maintain homes and improve property performance and sustainability. The planned programme is directed by the Asset Management Strategy and key features of the programme detailed within the Strategy. The aspiration is to generate a ratio of expenditure which is weighted towards commissioning planned rather than reactive work. English Rural will look to deliver its planned works programme based on a regional approach where possible to improve value for money and efficiencies whilst at the same time recognising the limitations of localised contractors and the national spread of its stock.

2.8 The planned programme of works also incorporates elements of English Rural's health and safety responsibilities as a landlord. These are detailed and managed through the Landlord Health and Safety Risk Map and include, for example, Gas Inspections and Certification every year, and Electrical Inspections at least every 5 years. Other health and safety responsibilities detailed in the risk map are subject to review at regular maintenance meetings to ensure concerns are identified and resolved or escalated where necessary.

2.9 English Rural will also look to maximise opportunities created through the void process to undertake maintenance work. A void standard has been established and will be subject to periodic review in consultation with residents. Handling voids effectively requires good communication between maintenance and housing management staff; responsibilities and timings in this respect are detailed in English Rural's internal lettings and sales guidance.

2.10 The repairs and maintenance service offered by English Rural will also cover requests for aids and adaptations. A separate aids and adaptations policy is in place to direct the service in this respect.

2.11 As well as providing repairs and maintenance to properties, English Rural is also responsible for providing certain communal services which are typically subject to a service charge. Communal works of this type are subject to the procurement policy and principles of the general repairs and maintenance service. Where a service charge is

collected from residents, appropriate steps are taken to ensure consultation is undertaken when necessary and appropriate information supplied.

3. SERVICE MONITORING AND REVIEW

3.1 Repairs and maintenance service standards are subject to periodic review in consultation with residents and detailed within the published Tenants Handbook. Standards include prescribed response times for reactive repairs and also include measuring resident satisfaction. These standards are collated and reported to the Residents Panel and Board along with additional resident feedback. Service standards relating to quality and professionalism are secured as part of the preferred contractor arrangements.

3.2 Service failures are monitored in line with the procurement, complaints and compensation policies. The Association also operates a post work inspection regime for all major repairs as part of the ongoing contract management arrangement. These arrangements also include monthly reviews to monitor contract performance. All responsive repair works with a value of more than £750 are also post inspected. Post inspections of lesser amounts and of specific contractors may be undertaken on a discretionary basis or more frequently where performance and service concerns have been identified. Regular development inspections are also form part of the repairs and maintenance monitoring process, helping to identify longer term trends. These inspections may involve staff, external contractors, board members and residents.

3.3 Performance monitoring also includes recording and reviewing internal data and information at regular maintenance meetings as well as reporting performance information to the Scrutiny Panel and Board. Issues of poor performance will be investigated with a view to improving internal processes or in line with the procurement policy. The Association operates both a complaints policy and compensation policy which may also be relevant when dealing with issues of poor performance. External performance monitoring will also be undertaken by way of external benchmarking.

3.4 Budgetary control and monitoring is critical to the overall success of the repairs and maintenance service. The repairs and maintenance budget is set annually and directed by the Business Plan. Monthly budgetary monitoring is then undertaken through the maintenance meetings, with seasonal variations and higher value reactive repairs approved accordingly. The monthly monitoring includes an assessment of both expenditure paid and committed through contracts and works orders, this is enabled through the IT management software and works order process. Operating an effective planned programme which weights expenditure on a known contractual basis also helps to minimise risks in this area. Budgetary variations are reported to the Board as appropriate with approval sought for any expenditure on essential services.