

# Tenants' Handbook

Looking after your Home and  
Estate

Introduction

# Introduction

This chapter tells you about estate services and housing repairs. It describes the services provided to your home and our estates.

It also has general advice on looking after your home and what to do if something goes wrong, including reporting repairs.

## Part A – Looking after your home and estate

### Clean and green

We are committed to a cleaner and greener Southwark. We want high standards for your estates and all public areas and we want to make sure recycling is a top priority for everyone.

We need your help every day to achieve this and keep Southwark clean and green.

We clean all shared estate areas (inside or outside), blocks and sheltered units by:

- Clearing fallen leaves
- Removing graffiti within 24 hours
- Making sure outside areas are free of litter
- Cleaning lifts, landings, balconies and stairs regularly
- Removing any large items of rubbish from shared areas
- Making sure that pathways are gritted when the weather is snowy or icy.

### Reporting repairs

You can report repairs online via [www.southwark.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/repairs)

If you do go online there are several options including: 'Report a repair' and 'Emergency repairs', which you can click to report your repair. When you click on the button you are taken to a form to complete. Simply enter your details and tell us what the repair is. There are diagrams showing you how to report a repair by clicking on the picture that best shows the repair you need.

You can report non-urgent repairs via email: [www.repairs@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:www.repairs@southwark.gov.uk)

You can also report repairs via telephone 0800 952 4444

### Emergency repairs.

Generally a repair is categorised as an emergency if it poses a serious risk to health and safety, the structure of the property, or results in the property being insecure.

- If the repair is an emergency we will attend within 24 hours.
- For all repair emergencies, telephone the 24 hour free phone number 0800 952 4444 or email: [repairs@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:repairs@southwark.gov.uk)

However, if your call refers to a gas, electricity or water supply problem you should contact:

**Gas leaks:** 0800 111 999

**Electricity** (UK Power Networks): 0800 028 0247

**Thames Water:** 0800 714 614

### When will an emergency repair be fixed?

If there is a danger to your health and safety we will try to attend within two hours of the repair being reported, or within four hours if it's about heating, estate lighting or door entry systems. This will be to make the situation safe as we may have to come back another day to do the full repair.

### Estate inspections

You have an open invitation to take part in our programme of monthly estate inspections – walking the estate together is a good way to look at real issues and plan action. Estate inspections are an informal walkabout on your estate with both council officers and tenants, where you can point out the issues which you think are important and need action.

If you want to get involved, contact your Resident Services Officer or designated customer contact point to find out more about this; the more you join in the better your services will be

### Reporting issues on estates

If you live on a housing estate you can report any problems needing a repair directly on 0800 952 4444. This could be anything from a lift that is out of order, or broken glass on a stairwell, to a security door not closing properly.

If you live on an estate and there are problems with estate cleaning or dumped cars, you can either contact your Resident Services Officer or the environmental services' helpline on 020 7525 2000

You can also report problems with street lights, your rubbish collection, street cleaning or rubbish left on the street directly on 020 7525 2000

## Rubbish

It's a chore, but disposing of rubbish properly saves our time and your money.

- Putting rubbish and recycling in the chutes or bins provided, as directed by us, will help to keep your area a decent place to live
- If you put nappies and sanitary towels, for example, in the toilet this will inevitably cause blockages and we charge fees for blockage by careless disposal
- Leaving rubbish lying around, especially in corridors or stairwells, can cause a hazard, especially in the event of an emergency, as these are your escape routes
- Rubbish carelessly dumped will also attract vermin and we prosecute those responsible

Don't dump it - tell us and we'll collect up to six items for £18

### Bulky rubbish

Do not dump bulky items, such as furniture, in the street or in any shared area.

If you need help to get rid of any large items such as furniture you can arrange this, for a charge of £18, by completing our on-line form at [www.southwark.gov.uk](http://www.southwark.gov.uk)

Alternatively you can call our environmental services helpline on 020 7525 2000 and we will arrange collection within five to ten days.

Dumping in shared areas and the street is antisocial and, if we have evidence, we will prosecute with a view to recharging for the costs of removal.

For garden or builders' waste, please check with the environmental services helpline for current arrangements.

## Chutes

Only everyday domestic household rubbish, wrapped or in a bag, goes down the chute. Try to do this between 8am and 8pm to reduce disturbance to your neighbours.

Do not put cardboard boxes, coat hangers, umbrellas, brick rubble, wood, etc, down the chute – it will cause blockages and is inconvenient for everyone and costly to clear.

If a hopper door of a chute is broken or missing, you should report it to the *StreetLeaders* on 020 7525 2000 and we will try to repair it as a matter of urgency.

If you put material into the chutes that is not normal household rubbish you are creating a fire risk for both yourself and your neighbours and you may also be breaking your tenancy agreement.

## Lifts

All our lifts are serviced regularly but inevitably there are occasional breakdowns. You can help us keep them in working order by making sure:

- Any problems are reported immediately on 0800 952 4444
- Your children and their friends do not play in or with the lifts or its parts
- Lift doors are not blocked or held open
- Lifts are not overloaded by heavy items

Every lift has an instructions plate inside telling you what to do if it breaks down.

## Recycling

Recycling services include weekly food and garden waste collections and fortnightly collections for both rubbish and dry recyclables.

Below are just some of the items you're able to recycle in Southwark, either at a local recycling centre or by using your blue bin or box, clear bag collection (or communal bins if you live in a flat).

Please ensure you only include items listed and remove lids, tops, caps and corks and rinse out any remaining food.

- **Glass:** glass bottles and glass jars of any colour
- **Metals:** drink cans and food tins - please empty, rinse and crush; biscuit, cake and sweet tins; metal lids (from glass bottles and jars); aluminium foil (clean only); aerosol spray cans - do not puncture or squash
- **Plastics:** plastic drinks bottles; plastic household bottles, e.g. shampoo and detergent bottles; plastic food trays, tubs, pots, lids and tops
- **Paper:** newspapers and magazines; catalogues and brochures; junk mail, flyers and leaflets; envelopes (please remove the plastic windows); telephone directories, including the Yellow Pages; shredded paper (please put in a used paper envelope or paper bag); greeting cards; food packets (like cereal boxes); cardboard (please remove any plastics from boxes, break down cardboard, and flatten); egg boxes;

detergent and washing powder boxes; tissue boxes; toilet roll tubes and kitchen roll tubes

- **Cartons:** food and drink cartons such as Tetra Pak (commonly used for milk and juices)

### Contamination

Please only place the items listed above inside your blue bin or box, communal recycling bin or clear bag.

These items should not be placed in the recycling:

- Food waste
- Textiles
- Plastic bags
- Black bags
- Small items of household furniture

Please place materials into bags, boxes or bins. Loose recycling materials presented in black bags will not be collected.

Many tenants have door to door recycling schemes with regular deliveries of clear plastic bags to use for recycling as directed.

For details of your local recycling facilities contact your designated customer contact point.

Remember: the more you recycle, the less it costs everyone.

To dispose of harmful chemicals, for example paint stripper, turpentine, wood preservative or varnish, please call the City of London's Hazardous Waste Removal information line on 020 7332 3433.

Batteries: shops selling these often have a bin for used and dead batteries

### Engine oil

It is illegal to put engine oil down the drain and it is harmful to the environment. Simply take any waste oil to:

#### Veolia ES Southwark Ltd

Veolia Environmental Services (UK) Plc  
Southwark Integrated Waste Management Facility  
43 Devon Street  
Peckham SE15 1AL

## Part B – Looking after your home – Your repairs service

### Introduction

It is a condition of your tenancy that you must use the property (including its fixtures and fittings) carefully, and take reasonable care of it.

You must also take care of interior decoration and repay us the cost of any repair or replacement to the property, block or estate, resulting from your negligence or failure to use the property carefully, and take such reasonable care of it.

It is also a condition of your tenancy that we, as your landlord, agree to carry out certain repairs. This is generally to keep the structure (roof, brickwork, and so on) and the outside of your home in good repair and to maintain the installations (pipes and equipment) for water, electricity, gas and drainage inside your home.

### Allow us to inspect

For your part, you must agree to allow us to enter your home to:

- Inspect the state of the property
- Carry out pest control treatments
- Service your gas installation
- Carry out any of our duties described in the conditions of tenancy, including repairs

### Tell us of any problems

We also require you to tell us of any problems with the state of repair of the property and common parts as soon as possible. And, if we in turn fail to carry out our repairing responsibilities, you will be entitled to fair and reasonable compensation, which may be deducted from any debt outstanding to us.

We expect your repairs to be carried out as quickly as is reasonably possible and we have also agreed a code of conduct with our contractors for working in your home.

### Repairs we are responsible for

We are responsible for maintaining the structure and outside of your home and pipes for water, electricity, gas and drainage inside your home; to include:

- Drains
- Gutters and external pipes
- Service roads
- Designated play areas
- Entrances
- Entrance halls
- Staircases
- Roofs
- Firefighting equipment.

Subject to reasonable expenditure and consultation this may also apply to the following:

- Lifts
- Communal TV aerials
- Entry phones
- Communal lighting
- Refuse collection facilities
- Communal heating
- Ventilation services

We are not liable for any repair that you have caused by not looking after the property properly, even if it is a repair that we would normally carry out, including sinks blocked due to pouring cooking oil and fat into the sink.

## Repairs we can charge for

We will charge you the full cost of a repair if you have caused it by your abuse or negligence, or if we have had to force entry because you have not allowed access for pest control, gas servicing or during a major work project.

## Vandalism and neglect

We are not responsible for repairs caused as a result of damage or neglect by you, your family, your visitors or your pets, including any accidental damage or any alterations you may have made. In some circumstances, if you damage our property, we will consider that you have broken your tenancy agreement. If we have to carry out any repairs you have caused we will charge you for the full cost of the work including our administrative costs. If you cause serious damage to our property you risk losing your home.

If your home has been damaged by criminal action, you must report this to the police, so that they can investigate the matter. The police will give you a crime number, which you must give us so that we can arrange any repairs that are needed; although you should note that obtaining a crime number will not automatically mean that we will undertake a repair free of charge.

## Repairs you are responsible for

You are responsible for the general upkeep of your home. When your tenancy ends, you must leave the property clean and tidy and ready for the next tenant to move in. If you do this and give us four weeks' notice and a forwarding address we may pay you an allowance to say thank you.

You are responsible for most minor repairs to your home, including repairs to:

- Electric plugs
- Fuses and light bulbs
- Inside doors
- Inside door and cupboard handles
- Catches and locks
- Garden gates and fences
- Toilet seats

- Broken glass inside your home
- Floor tiles
- Small cracks in plaster
- Washing machine connections

You are also responsible for your garden, including any trees and window boxes, and must keep all garden space, balconies and yards tidy and free from rubbish.

## Reporting a repair

Report repairs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Our repairs service is always open so that you do not have to wait to report a repair.

- The best way to report a repair is online via [www.southwark.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/repairs)
- There are pictures and diagrams to help to pick the right repair for you
- You can also report a repair via freephone telephone: **0800 952 4444** (mobile users may incur charges).

If you report a repair via telephone be ready to give us:

- A daytime contact telephone number and your name and address
- All of the information you have about the repair
- Any previous report of the repair

To help you identify a fault we have a **Repairs finder** chapter online which contains pictures of different types of repairs.

### By post

You can report repairs in writing to MySouthwark service point.

### By email

You can report non urgent repairs by emailing [repairs@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:repairs@southwark.gov.uk)

### By visiting our website

You can also report repairs on our website [www.southwark.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/repairs)

## Emergency repairs

Emergency repairs are those that you need because of the risk of injury to people or major damage to your home. An emergency repair will often be temporary and more work may be needed. Our staff will help you make sure these follow up repairs are carried out.

You can report an emergency repair on Freephone telephone 0800 952 4444

Because these repairs are urgent, we cannot always give you an appointment. We may even have to ask you to stay at home until our contractor can visit.

## Reporting gas repairs

If you smell gas, please phone the emergency number 0800 111 999 immediately. It does not matter who your supplier is. This is a freephone number unless you are calling from a mobile phone. Repairs to any gas cookers or similar appliances that you have fitted are your responsibility. Please note these must be fitted by a 'gas safe' registered installer. You should report repairs to gas fires or boilers on **0800 952 4444** in the normal way.

## Getting ready for the repair

Sometimes someone may need to visit your home to inspect the repair before we can register it. If this is the case we will make an appointment and the visiting officer will carry Southwark Council identification. We may also have to ask you to remove furniture, curtains or carpets from a room before the repair is started. Our staff will tell you about this when making the appointment for the work. If you do not do this the work may be delayed.

## Service standards: When will your repair be done?

### Emergency – within 24 hours

Our contractor will attend within 24 hours. Where there is a danger to your health and safety, we will try to attend within two hours of you reporting the repair. Please note that this is a 'make safe' service, we may carry out the full repair as a lower priority.

Examples of emergency repairs include:

- Having no electricity inside your home
- All serious plumbing leaks where the building is in danger of damage and the leak cannot be contained in a bucket, for example
- Serious leaks in the roof and other major structural problems
- Making your property secure following a break-in
- A blocked toilet when there is only one toilet in the home

### Urgent – within three days

These are repairs that, while not an emergency, can be a serious nuisance if they are not repaired.

Examples of urgent repairs include the loss of:

- Some electrical power
- Some of your water supply
- All or some of your heating or water heating during the colder months (between 31 October and 1 May).

### Non urgent - within 20 working days

These are routine repairs which our contractors will carry out within 20 working days.

Examples of non-urgent repairs include:

- Minor plastering
- Minor electrical and plumbing repairs

Sometimes we will have planned major work that will include the repairs that you have identified. In these cases there may be a reasonable delay before we start work as long as there will be no serious risk to your health and safety.

## What to do if you are not happy with a repair

The first thing you should do is contact us on 0800 952 4444 and we will send someone round to either fix or inspect the problems.

In the unlikely event that this does not work you may want to apply to the arbitration tribunal to make an independent decision about the work.

Either way, we may be able to offer compensation if we have not kept to our side of the agreement and have not done your repairs or have done them badly.

## Appointments and working hours

Normal working hours for non-urgent repairs are from **8am to 8pm** and we aim to make an appointment for all repairs. Some larger repairs will take some time to carry out so appointment times for those will be limited.

We offer three different appointment slots:

- Mornings (8am to 1pm)
- Afternoons (12pm to 6pm)
- School run (10am to 3pm)

Missed appointments cost time and money. If we make an appointment for a repair or an inspection and we do not turn up to that appointment you are entitled to claim compensation, unless there is a reasonable excuse for us missing the appointment. If we have made an appointment with you and you do not keep it we may charge you for attending.

## Forcing entry

There are certain situations where we will need to take action to protect the wellbeing of you or your neighbours. If we cannot do this under normal circumstances we have the right to force entry to your home. We will only do this under special circumstances, for example, if we need to:

- Service your gas appliances and we have not been able to contact you after two attempts



- Treat your home for **pests** and we have not been able to contact you after two attempts

We may also force entry to your home to carry out repair inspections or routine repairs such as repairing water leaks. We will only force entry to your home if the repair problem is serious and we have not been able to contact you. In these cases we are likely to charge you the cost of repairing any damage caused.

The only other time we may need to force entry to your home is if there is a fault in your home (for example, a leak or other similar emergency) that could injure you, or damage your property, or another property.

## Decorating

You are responsible for decorating the interior of your home.

If, however, your decorations are damaged following a repair, we may either repair that damage or pay you an allowance to have the damaged areas redecorated.

In line with our legal obligations, we will carry out any outside works where necessary to maintain the condition of the building. There are set timescales for when we must carry out certain repairs.

## What if repairs are not done?

Our aim is to complete the majority of the jobs raised right first time, some jobs may be too complicated to allow this to happen but we will advise you of this so that it is clear what you should expect.

If we have not finished a repair you should contact us on 0800 952 4444. If the repair is not started within the timescales shown in our service standards (see 10 Service standards: when will your repair be done? in this chapter) or the Repairs finder, you may be entitled to compensation. You can also arrange to carry out the repair yourself and we will refund your costs. There are, however, strict conditions for doing this.

You can only arrange for repairs to be carried out yourself and be refunded if:

- You can prove that you told us about the repair
- We have not carried out the repair within the time limits
- The work does not cost more than £320
- The repair is in your home

If you meet these conditions and you want to carry out a repair yourself you must follow the procedure below.

### Procedure to carry out your own repairs

You may carry out the repair or arrange for the repair to be carried out by a building contractor. We will check that the work has been satisfactorily carried out, then refund you the costs we would have had to pay if we had carried

out the work. We will tell you our costs if you ask us. Just to be clear we will not refund you the amount that you paid.

The government runs a Right to Repair scheme for certain repairs. If one of the following repairs is overdue you should contact us on 0800 952 4444 to see if it is included in the Right to Repair scheme. You may then be able to get someone else to carry out the repair and claim compensation. The cost of the repairs are limited

The qualifying repairs are:

- Loss of electricity
- Loss of water supply
- Loss of gas supply
- A blocked flue to your boiler or open fire
- No heating
- A blocked or leaking toilet wastepipe
- A toilet that will not flush (if it is your only toilet)
- A blocked kitchen sink
- A leaking pipe, tank or cistern
- A leaking roof
- An insecure door, window or lock
- A loose banister or handrail
- Rotten stairs or floor
- A door entry system not working
- An extractor fan not working.

a) If we have not carried out the repair within the times in the service standards or repairs finder chapters, you must tell us in writing that you are going to carry out the repair or arrange for the repair to be carried out.

b) If, after seven days (or 24 hours, if it is an emergency repair) of receiving this written notice, we have not:

- Carried out the repair
- Told you in writing that we could not carry out the work because we could not get in to your property
- Told you in writing that the repair would cost more than £320
- Told you in writing that we are not responsible for the repair or that the repair is not necessary

## Improving our repairs service

We are always trying to improve our repairs service so we do need to know when you are not happy with the quality of the work.

To help us improve the service, we carry out satisfaction surveys. Do not be surprised if one of our staff calls you when the work has been finished to ask you how well it went. If we have not been able to call you, we will send you a feedback form asking for your comments. We also use research companies to carry out independent surveys to help us assess our performance.

## Contractors' code of conduct

Our contractors must:

- Not play radios when working in your home
- Not smoke when working in your home
- Make sure that there is clear and safe access to your home at all times
- Make sure that they carry identification
- Not use abusive or offensive language
- Not leave dangerous tools around
- Park considerately
- Use dust sheets and clean up afterwards
- Make sure your services are reconnected at the end of the day
- Wear appropriate clothes

## Protecting against frost damage and burst pipes

If you have a burst pipe, you should:

- Switch off your central heating or immersion heater
- Turn off the main stopcock (make sure you know where it is)
- Put something under the leak to catch water
- Turn on taps to drain water out of the system
- Report the problem to us on 0800 952 4444

If cold weather is forecast you can help reduce the risk of burst pipes by:

- Making sure taps are turned off fully
- Reporting any overflows
- Keeping your home as warm as possible

## Going away

If you leave your home empty for more than a couple of days you should:

- Turn the water off at the mains
- Turn off your water heating, especially electric immersion heaters
- Turn down your central heating
- Unplug all appliances

## Condensation

Condensation is caused when warm air meets a cold surface. It can damage your home, clothes and bedding if you do not treat it. It can also cause mould to grow on walls and ceilings.

You can reduce condensation by:

- Making sure your home is warm and well ventilated: do not block up airbricks or any other types of ventilation

- Opening windows or using any ventilation (such as window fans) and closing the kitchen door when cooking
- Opening windows or using any ventilation and closing the bathroom door when running a bath
- Opening windows or using ventilation and closing doors when washing and drying clothes and drying clothes outside wherever possible
- Keeping your home warm by making sure there is a gap between your radiators and any furniture.

## Keeping your home secure

- Always check the identity of callers before you let them into your home
- Lock your doors and close your windows when leaving your home
- Use your door chain and spyhole if you have them

We have provided door entry security systems to a large number of properties. We have designed these systems so only people who live in your block or their visitors can get in. For more information please read the door entry and CCTV systems in the Respecting others chapter of your handbook. Do not install any security gates or grilles yourself without asking us for permission first. We will only give you permission if you can show that the police and the fire brigade approve of the gates that you want to install.

## The password scheme

To reduce the threat of bogus callers, we have introduced a password scheme. If you would like to be included please contact MySouthwark service point where you can give them a password that Resident Services Officers and contractors will use when visiting your home. You can change this password at any time.

## Bogus callers

Some criminals trick their way into homes so that they can steal.

To help protect yourself:

- Join our password scheme
- Always ask callers for their identity card
- Use your chain and spyhole if you have one
- Do not let strangers or anyone you are not sure about into your home

All our workers and contractors carry identity cards. Always ask to see their card before you let anyone in. If you are not sure, please contact MySouthwark service point or the police. Genuine callers will not mind being asked for identification and will expect you to ask. If in doubt, keep them out.



## Saving energy in your home

You can get advice about energy in your home from a number of sources, including:

- Your gas or electricity suppliers
- The Southwark Council website [www.southwark.gov.uk](http://www.southwark.gov.uk)
- The Energy Saving Trust advice centre on 0800 512 012

Using energy efficiently is important to reduce your cost of living and to help protect the environment. There are simple steps you can take to reduce your fuel bills and keep your home warm and comfortable (keeping warm and comfortable also helps you keep healthy):

- Only boil enough water in your kettle for what you need to save £20 a year
- Keep lids on cooking pots. This speeds up cooking times and saves fuel
- Unplug mobile phone chargers and switch off your TV and computer instead of leaving them on standby to save £30 a year
- Switch off lights when you leave the room to save £10 a year
- Close your curtains at dusk to keep heat in and tuck curtains behind radiators where possible
- Energy saving light bulbs use less energy and last ten times longer. One 20W bulb can save you £60 over its lifetime

We will usually carry out work to improve insulation and reduce heat loss as part of our maintenance programme. Your designated *My Southwark* Service Point should be able to tell you whether any work is programmed for your home and, if so, when it may be carried out.

Are you paying too much for your fuel? You may be able to save hundreds of pounds every year by changing how you are charged for your fuel (your fuel tariff) and the way you pay your bills. Consumer Direct is funded by the government to give free, independent consumer advice on your gas or electricity supply, including how to get the best deal on your energy bills. Call 08454 040506 or visit [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

## Home improvements

You can carry out improvements to your home as long as you get your Resident Services Officer's permission in writing before you start. We will not normally refuse this permission but we may apply some conditions to the work you can do.

If you want to carry out any home improvements you should write to your Resident Services Officer explaining what work you want to do and who will be doing it. You should also check whether you need planning permission or building regulations approval. If you do, it is always best to get professional advice to help you with the work.

You can do the work when you have any planning permission and building regulations approval you need, as well as permission from us. You must pay for the work and repair any damage that you cause.

Improvements can include, among other things:

- Any additions or alteration to fixtures, fittings or services
- Decorating the outside of the property
- Replacing or installing floor coverings

We will not give you permission to put aerials or satellite dishes on walls, roofs or windows because of the damage that they could cause. We will charge you for any damage you cause with dishes or aerials. If you have put up an aerial or dish and we need to put up some scaffolding you will be responsible for removing it, as we will not accept liability for any damage. When deciding whether to give you permission to carry out an improvement, we will consider if:

- The improvement will make your home any less safe
- The improvement will cost us money
- The improvement will reduce the sale or rental value of the property
- In the case of floor covering, it is likely to cause a noise nuisance

Removing carpets and replacing them with a hardwood or laminate finish can greatly increase the level of noise and cause a noise nuisance which can be annoying for your neighbours.

Where we know there may be a problem with noise, we may give you permission to install hardwood or laminate flooring on the condition you use a high quality underlay. If these improvements are permanent you cannot remove them when you move out without our permission. In these circumstances we can compensate you for improvements, as long as we gave you permission in the first place. It is always a good idea to keep receipts for any improvements you have paid for.

### Compensation

You may be entitled to compensation for any improvements you have carried out, but this applies only when your tenancy ends. Please contact your Resident Services Officer for more information.

If you carry out improvements and leave the property while you are still an introductory tenant, you will be not be entitled to any compensation.

## Home insurance

We cannot insure your furniture, belongings and decorations against theft, fire, vandalism, burst pipes or leaks. We strongly advise you to take out household contents insurance. You can insure your belongings

under a low cost home contents insurance plan arranged through a designated national insurer. For more information please pick up an information pack from your customer service point, or email [crystal@jltgroup.com](mailto:crystal@jltgroup.com) or call 0845 601 7007.

## Planned maintenance and improvements

We carry out programmes of major repair and improvement every year. These could be:

- Planned maintenance schemes, like our programme for decorating the outside of properties; gutter clearance or drain jetting
- Repairs or improvement schemes aimed at improving your homes to modern day standards, such as new kitchens and bathrooms

All housing area's have a programme of the refurbishment works we have planned for the next two years so you will be able to check to find out if your home is included. We develop these programmes using:

- The results of surveys we carry out about the condition of our properties
- What we learn from consultations with local tenants' and residents' associations and area forums
- Professional advice from our staff or our consultants

These projects are very expensive to plan, manage and carry out so you must allow us into your home to do the work.

Your tenancy agreement states you must give us access to complete these works.

## Major work

Sometimes we may have to do so much work inside your home that you will have to move out for a while. These are major works that would seriously disrupt your living conditions. We will take account of a range of factors when making this decision.

If you agree to move temporarily while the work is carried out you can claim a disturbance allowance to cover your costs for disconnecting and reconnecting your services, such as gas, and the costs of moving to and from your temporary home. Your Resident Services Officer will be able to explain how to claim these costs.

If we ask you to stay in your home while we carry out such work you may be able to claim compensation. If you, or a relative, have to take time off work to give us access to your home you can claim an amount equal to any wages or holiday pay you can show us you have lost. We will also pay the cost of electricity used by our contractors.

Sometimes so much work is needed that it alters the layout of your home so that it no longer meets your needs. If this happens you will need to move permanently. In this situation we will offer you suitable alternative accommodation and you will receive compensation under the S.39 Land Compensation Act 1973.

## Consulting you about major works

Where the major works to your home are to improve or convert it we will give you at least two months to comment on our proposals.

Where major works are to improve or convert a number of homes, as part of a planned programme, we will also consult the local tenants' and residents' association.

## Equipment and adaptations

We can help disabled people with equipment and adaptations to their homes to make them more suited to their needs. This includes aids for carrying out household tasks, help with access to your home, getting around your home, along with bathroom and kitchen adaptations. If you require any help, contact Adult Social Care on **0845 600 1287** to ask for an occupational therapy assessment.

An occupational therapist will assess your need for this help and whether you are entitled to it. They will then work closely with the housing adaptations team to make sure that the right adaptations are provided to help you stay in your home.

If you require any repairs carried out to these adaptations, contact our Repairs Team on 0800 952 4444 or 020 7525 2600.

## Handyperson service

The Handyperson Service's main aim is to help you maintain safe and independent living if you are over 60 and disabled. The service carries out small repairs and adaptations to your home, including changing lightbulbs, putting up shelves and curtain rails, for a reasonable charge.

Jobs are restricted to two hours. The handyperson does not do building work, decorating, electrical wiring, gas installations or gardening.

For more information please contact the Handyperson team on 020 7525 1862.

## Pest control

If you find any of the following pests in your home, you should report it to your Resident Services Officer or contact 0800 952 4444 immediately.

- Cockroaches
- Pharaoh ants (very small pink ants)

- Ghost ants (very small white ants)
- Rats
- Mice
- Wasp nests
- Bed bugs

As a council tenant you will receive free treatments for these pests

As over 90 per cent of our housing in Southwark is in blocks it is very easy for pests to move from one property to another. Because of this, we will very often arrange to treat whole blocks, even if not all properties are affected. As it is very important for our pest control staff to treat every home we will use our powers to enter your home if we cannot get in after making an appointment with you. In these circumstances, we will charge you the cost of any damage caused.

Please note that it is your responsibility to deal with other pests, such as flies, black ants, silverfish, woodlice, spiders and fleas; we can treat these but there will be a charge.

Please note your tenancy conditions state that you must not feed pigeons anywhere on the estate. They can cause a nuisance to your neighbours and can attract other vermin such as rats, mice, squirrels and foxes.

### **Brown Tail Moth**

In Southwark we experience occasional problems with the caterpillar from the brown tail moth. These caterpillars are almost completely black with white scales on their sides, two red spots near their back end and are covered in yellowy brown hairs. Trees infested by these caterpillars will contain grey silken tents. The hairs on these caterpillars can cause irritation and an itchy rash. If you see any signs of these caterpillars, you should tell your Resident Services Officer immediately and they will arrange for them to be treated. If the hairs get in your eyes, get medical help immediately.

## **District heating**

Some of our estates benefit from district heating systems. These are low cost heating systems run from a central boiler house that is usually on or near the estate. Your heating and hot water is paid for through a set charge with your rent.

The heating is controlled centrally and is usually only provided for the colder months. This will be from at least 1 October to 31 March, but sometimes we will turn the systems on earlier and leave them on later, depending on the weather.

We are also investing over the long term in heating on demand systems where there is no heating season but where heating will be available throughout the year depending on the weather. To see if your estate benefits from heating on demand, call us on 0800 952 4444.

We set standards for our district heating service. Between 7am and 10pm we aim to heat living rooms, including your kitchen, to 21°C, and your bedrooms, bathroom and hall to 16°C. As district systems are usually very big, it is impossible to be able to guarantee these temperatures so we aim for no more than 1.5°C higher or lower than those temperatures. Night temperatures will be set for 5°C lower. We aim to provide hot water 24 hours a day at about 60°C.

## **Problems with the water supply**

Occasionally there are problems with the water supply. There are lots of reasons why this may happen and we will work with Thames Water to reduce the effects and restore your supply as soon as possible.

If there is no water, please be careful not to leave your home with the taps left on or plugs left in. Also check that you have turned off your taps before you go to bed. By doing this you can help reduce both water loss and the risk of causing flooding to any downstairs neighbours when the water comes back on. This is especially important if you live in a block of flats where there may be lots of people living below you. We regularly have to force entry into people's homes to turn off taps flooding their neighbours below. This causes inconvenience and upset all round. So please remember, if the water goes off, please turn your taps off.