

Rechargeable Repairs Policy



Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

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Owner	<i>John Hall</i>		
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Last updated	<i>07/01/2025</i>	Last updated by	<i>Louis Bebb</i>
Review date	<i>TBC once policy is approved at cabinet.</i>		
Purpose	<i>The purpose of this policy is to set out how Sandwell Council will recover the cost of repairs that that are deemed to be rechargeable to tenants, former tenants or leaseholders due to damage, neglect, misuse or abuse.</i>		

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1. Purpose

1.1 This policy explains how Sandwell Council manages rechargeable repairs. The main aims of this document are to:

- Outline the process for charging tenants for repairs caused by damage or neglect (whether intentional or accidental) while excluding normal wear and tear.
- Ensure repair costs are recovered fairly and efficiently, helping the Council manage its housing services responsibly.
- Prevent rechargeable repairs where possible by keeping tenants informed about their rights and responsibilities for repairs during their tenancy.

1.2 By clearly setting out these principles, the Council aims to maintain its homes and communal areas to a high standard, promote tenant accountability, and ensure fairness in managing repair costs.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy is relevant to all our staff, tenants, former tenants and leaseholders.

3. What are Rechargeable Repairs to Sandwell Council?

3.1 Rechargeable repairs refer to maintenance or repairs in council properties that are the responsibility of the tenant, leaseholder, or former tenant, rather than the landlord.

3.2 These repairs are typically charged to the responsible person if damage occurs due to negligence, misuse, or failure to carry out maintenance duties. Examples of rechargeable repairs may include:

- **Damage Repairs:** Includes repairs for tenant-caused damage to the property, fixtures, fittings, or appliances, as well as structural damage or issues caused by DIY activities.
- **Security and Access:** Covers lock changes due to lost keys or similar issues.

- **Clearance and Storage:** Includes clearing contents from vacated properties and storing belongings after abandonment or eviction.
- **Property Condition:** Addresses unsatisfactory conditions left in the property, garden, or outbuildings.

Specific examples of typical rechargeable repairs can be found in the [SMBC Tenancy Handbook](#).

3.3 Tenants, leaseholders, and former tenants will be informed of the costs involved, and charges will be based on the repair's nature and the actual cost of fixing the issue. The policy ensures that the responsibility for repair and maintenance is clear and encourages all parties to take care of the properties.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 Tenant Responsibilities

Tenant responsibilities are outlined in the [SMBC Tenancy Handbook](#). Failure to carry out these responsibilities may lead to further deterioration of the property. The Council may choose to carry out necessary repairs and recharge the tenant for the cost and / or take other reasonable and proportionate action to enforce the tenancy conditions.

4.1.1 Damage to Property

Tenants may be charged for any damage to their home or communal areas. Charges will apply if the damage is caused deliberately, through neglect, or carelessness by the tenant, their household, or visitors.

4.1.2 Deliberate Damage or Neglect

Tenants are responsible for repairs or replacements if damage is caused by neglect or carelessness by themselves, their household, or guests.

4.1.3 Self-Completion of Work

Tenants may undertake the work themselves, subject to obtaining written permission and ensuring that it is carried out by an approved tradesperson. However, in the case of any emergency repairs, Sandwell Council will intervene as necessary.

Failure to obtain permission may result in the tenant being required to restore the property to its original condition or be recharged for the repair. This is subject to the following conditions:

- The tenant must be residing at the property.
- Written permission must be obtained from the Council before starting the work.
- The repair must be completed by a competent, qualified person(s) within the agreed timeframe. If the work involves electrical or gas repairs, certificates must be provided.
- The work must be completed to an acceptable standard and is subject to inspection.
- The tenant is responsible for covering all costs associated with the repair.

For more information, refer to the [Tenancy Conditions Handbook](#).

4.2 Emergency Out-of-Hours Recharges

4.2.1 Rechargeable Out-of-Hours Repairs

If a tenant reports a repair outside of normal working hours that is identified as rechargeable, they will be advised of the associated call-out charges or “make safe” costs. These charges may be waived or reduced at the discretion of the Council.

4.2.2 Emergency Contact Information

For repairs outside of office hours, tenants should contact the housing staff via the emergency number or report the repair online. During normal office hours (Monday to Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:30 PM), tenants can call 0121 569 6000. For gas or electricity issues, tenants should contact their supplier directly.

4.3 Exemptions to Recharging Repairs

4.3.1 Third Party Damage

When a third party causes damage that is beyond the tenant's control, the tenant must report the situation to the police and obtain a crime or log number. A make-safe and/or repair will be performed, where it may be unsafe to leave the damage for an extended period, such as with a broken window.

4.3.2 Conditions for Reducing or Cancelling Charges

Charges may be reduced or waived in specific circumstances, and each case will be assessed on its individual merits. Consideration will be given to situations where there is a risk of harm to the individual or where paying the charges would cause significant hardship

4.4 Repayment

4.4.1 Accepting Liability

If the tenant accepts liability for a repair, they must complete a Rechargeable Repairs Invoice Request Form. Work will not begin until the form is completed.

4.4.2 Cost Breakdown

The tenant will be advised of the total costs, which will include:

- Current National Housing Federation Schedule of Rates plus a 6% surcharge
- VAT (20% as of 4/01/2011)

An example of the total cost will be determined through the Rechargeable Repair Invoice Request Form.

A list of common rechargeable items, with a brief description and cost, is available on the [Council website](#).

4.4.3 Administration Charge Incentive

To encourage prompt payment, tenants will be advised that the 15% administration charge will be waived if paid or a payment plan agreed when booking the job. The total cost will be recalculated to reflect this and recorded on the form.

4.4.4 Payment by Instalments

The tenant can opt to pay by instalments, which will be noted on the Rechargeable Repairs Invoice Request Form.

4.4.5 Insurance Claims

Tenants who are adequately insured should be encouraged to make a claim on their insurance policy.

4.4.6 Payment Within 10 Days

If the tenant wishes to pay within 10 days of the invoice date, the total cost minus the administration charge will be required. The

payment transaction number will be recorded, and a copy of the invoice will be placed in the property file.

4.4.7 Lack of Invoice Documentation

If the tenant does not have the invoice documentation but wishes to make a payment, the Rechargeable Repairs Invoice Request Form on the property file will be checked for the amount due. Additional information can be obtained from the Revenues & Benefit Team.

4.5 Right to Appeal

4.5.1 Appeal Process

If a tenant is dissatisfied with any aspect of their rechargeable repair request or the outcome, they may submit an appeal. The Council will respond to appeals promptly and collaborate with the tenant to address and resolve any concerns.

4.5.1 Submitting Feedback

For more information on submitting feedback or comments, visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/feedback.

4.6 Complaints

9.6.1 Sandwell Council strives to provide a fair service for rechargeable repairs; If a tenant or previous tenant objects to a recharge, they may wish to report a complaint. In this case, the tenant/former tenant/leaseholder must be informed that the problem will be handled in accordance with the official Complaints Procedure.

4.6.2 Making a Complaint:

Online: Contact us online through your MySandwell account and by email at customer_services@sandwell.gov.uk

Phone: 0121 569 7867

Post: Sandwell Council, Roway Lane, Oldbury, B69 3ES, Customer Feedback Team.

When you log a complaint, Sandwell Council will make every effort to resolve it as soon as possible.

5. Policy Development

5.1 Sandwell Council values clear communication in managing rechargeable repairs and supporting tenants, former tenants, and leaseholders. Residents were consulted on a draft of this policy, with opportunities to provide feedback online and in person.

5.2 Feedback from residents has helped shape a fair and transparent approach to rechargeable repairs that meets the needs of tenants and leaseholders.

5.3 The Council will ensure clear and accessible information about rechargeable repairs is available on our website and other channels.

6. Related Documents

The following documents that should read in conjunction with this policy:

- [Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy 2025 - 2030](#)
- Repairs Policy (draft)
- [Property Compliance Policy](#)
- [Reasonable Adjustment Policy](#)
- [Corporate Debt Recovery Policy](#)
- [Tenant Handbook](#)

7. Legal Framework

This policy is guided by the following legislation and regulations:

- Housing Act 1985 and 1988
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Local Government Act 2003
- Equality Act 2010
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018
- Debt Recovery Protocols

This framework ensures compliance with legal obligations while promoting fairness and accountability in managing rechargeable repairs.

8. Equality and Diversity

Sandwell Council will ensure that residents are treated fairly and have equal access to the process. This will be done by:

- Ensure that rechargeable repair charges are applied fairly and consistently to tenants, former tenants, and leaseholders, regardless of background or protected characteristics.
- Regularly review the policy to identify and address any disproportionate impacts on specific groups.

9. Reasonable Adjustments

9.1 Sandwell Council is committed to ensuring that tenants, former tenants, and leaseholders with disabilities or additional needs are not disadvantaged in relation to rechargeable repairs. The Council will make reasonable adjustments as follows:

- **Clear Communication:** Offer extra support to help tenants understand the repair charges and process, including face-to-face meetings or phone calls.
- **Support with Disputes:** Offer assistance to tenants who need help with challenging charges or disputes, including completing forms or providing additional guidance.
- **Debt Recovery Adjustments:** Make reasonable adjustments in the debt recovery process, such as providing flexibility with payments or alternative communication methods.

9.2 Customers can also request that we make any other reasonable adjustments in the following ways:

- in person
- in writing for example by email, by post, text
- by telephone
- by a family member when we have been given permission to do so; and or

- a member of staff may suggest for one to be made, when they are aware it will support the customer needs.

9.3 For more information, please refer to Sandwell's [Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#).

10. Monitoring and Review

10.1 This Policy will be reviewed every 2 years or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation, management, a major incident or if it is no longer suitable.

11. Policy Document Version Control

Version	Date	Description	Updated By	Approved By
1.0				
2.0				

12. Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Rechargeable Repairs

12.1 List of Rechargeable Repairs will be added to the Tenant Handbook (*link to be included once it has been uploaded to the Council Website*).