



Capital Improvements

Introduction

This leaflet provides information about our improvement works programmes to modernise Orkney Islands Council's housing stock.

The issues covered in this leaflet are:

- Home improvements.
- Scottish Housing Quality Standard.
- Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.
- Our commitments.
- Our procedures.
- Information on works undertaken.
- Contractors' duties.
- Safety issues.
- Completion of the work.

Note: The Council is referred to as "we" throughout this document. Tenants are referred to as "customers."

Home Improvements

We have an annual programme of improvement works (the improvement programme) and, from time to time, your home may be scheduled for improvement works of a certain type.

This programme ensures that our properties remain in good condition and that their facilities are up to date.

Examples of facilities that we might modernise through the programme are:

- Kitchens.
- Bathrooms.
- Heating systems.

We also review the standards of insulation in our properties to ensure that our properties are kept to the highest standards possible. This is extremely important given the climate in Orkney.

Scottish Housing Quality Standard

The Council was required to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015 and maintain this standard thereafter.

This is a professional standard, not a legal standard, although it contains the legal standard known as the “below tolerable standard”.

It sets out the quality standard which all Scottish social landlords, are required to meet.

To meet the standard, a house must be:

- Compliant with the Tolerable Standard (for more information see our Asset Management Strategy).
- Free from serious disrepair.
- Energy efficient.
- Provided with modern facilities and services.
- Healthy, safe and secure.

A detailed description of each of these requirements can be found on the website of the Scottish Government at: <https://www.gov.scot/>

Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing

The Council has also been required to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing since December 2020. In order to do so properties must meet challenging energy performance ratings. These are:

Dwelling Type.	EE Rating. (SAP 2009).		EE Rating. (SAP 2012).	
	Gas.	Electric.	Gas.	Electric.
Flats.	69.	65.	69.	63.
Four-in-a-block.	65.	65.	65.	62.
Houses non-detached.	69.	65.	69.	62.
Detached.	60.	60.	60.	57.

We are committed to achieving this standard within the timescales.

It is expected that a further energy efficiency standard will be required by 2032 and we are developing our plans for achieving this accordingly.

Our Commitments

When we carry out improvement works to your home we will:

- Treat you with respect and in a fair and consistent manner.
- Ensure that contractors employed to undertake any works adhere to our charter for our repairs service.

- Survey all of our stock to make sure that improvements carried out to the property take into consideration your needs as well as the needs of the property.
- Inform you when your home is included in an improvement scheme and keep you informed as the scheme develops.
- Invite you to look at examples of choices available to you and make you aware of where these can be viewed, for example, samples of kitchen units and worktops can be viewed at customer services or by an arranged visit to your home.
- Offer you as much choice as possible with the elements we are renewing in your home so that they will be to your taste.
- Carry out individual consultations in your home and explain the scope of works to be carried out.
- Arrange for the contractor to visit you at least one week before works begin to discuss any final issues.
- Try and include any adaptations you may need at the same time as other improvements works are undertaken (provided an assessment has been undertaken by an occupational therapist employed in Orkney Health and Care).
- Find you suitable, alternative, temporary accommodation and protect your belongings in situations where it is not possible for you to remain in your home while works are undertaken.
- Ask for your opinions of our improvement works after they have been completed to ensure that we continue to improve the services that we offer.

Our Procedures

We ensure that you receive adequate information about intended improvement works in advance of works beginning.

In order to do this, we will:

- Write to you in April to advise of any proposed works which we intend to carry out in that year (up to the following March).
- Advise you of the expected date of any improvement works beginning.

We will then write to you again confirming when works are beginning.

At this stage, we will provide information about what you will be required to do, for example, emptying kitchen cupboards.

We will then make sure that you are offered any choices available and that you are aware of what will happen at each stage in the process. For instance, you may be offered the choice of different kitchen units and worktops or for external doors these may be offered in different colours.

Information on Works Undertaken

This section of the leaflet describes the main types of improvement work that we undertake. It also describes your responsibilities.

This work includes:

- Bathroom and kitchen upgrades.
- Central heating.
- External doors.
- External insulation.
- Internal insulation.
- Ventilation.
- Windows.
- Other improvements.

Further information is available in our Policy on Improvement Works including the technical specification of the works we undertake.

Bathroom Upgrades

What we do:

We will carry out a number of improvements to bathrooms including the fitting of a new bathroom suite.

Your responsibilities:

You must remove any personal belongings from the bathroom before work starts.

Kitchen Upgrades

What we do:

We will carry out a number of improvements to kitchens, including fitting of fluorescent lighting and providing tiles behind the kitchen area.

We will only connect your own fittings provided they are compatible with new electrical regulations.

Sheltered accommodation will be provided with non-slip vinyl flooring to the kitchen and bathroom as part of the standard improvement works programme.

A grant is paid to you if:

- The contractor damages flooring.
- Or changes have been made to the kitchen layout which results in floor coverings needing to be replaced.

In addition, we correct damage to internal decoration and offer you the following choices:

- The Council painting the walls in white or magnolia at no expense to you.
- The Council applying your choice of paint and wallpaper providing you pay for materials).
- The Council providing a decoration grant for you to purchase materials from the supplier of your choice and you undertaking the work.

Note: Grant levels are limited in line with our policy; further details on present levels are available from the Housing Division.

Your responsibilities:

Before work begins, you must empty all kitchen cupboards and pantries.

Central Heating

What we do:

We only renew radiators, if necessary.

In order to maintain the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, and achieve the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing, we are looking at a range of modern heating systems.

New systems will replace older heating systems, as appropriate.

Your responsibilities:

If you have a separate coal fire you will be asked whether you wish to keep this in addition to your central heating. If you choose to do so we may require that you take on responsibility for its upkeep.

External Doors

What we do:

We will fit modern thermally efficient doors normally in a choice of colours.

In conservation areas choices may be restricted by planning conditions and wooden doors would be used in such instances.

Your responsibilities:

Your garden should be free from any trip hazards and should be reasonably tidy.

External Insulation

What we do:

In some situations, in order to improve the energy efficiency of a property, we may apply an external insulation to a property. This has a new rendered finish applied on top.

In some cases this may apply only to part of the house.

Tenants can generally choose from two colour options (providing this is in line with planning requirements). These options will apply throughout the scheme or street. Therefore, the majority vote will be chosen so the colour scheme is the same throughout the area.

Again, in conservation areas choices may be restricted by planning restrictions.

Your responsibilities:

Your garden should be free from any trip hazards and should be reasonably tidy.

Insulation**What we do:**

In order to maintain the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, and achieve the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing, we are looking at a range of modern insulation systems.

New systems will replace older insulation systems, as appropriate.

Your responsibilities:

Your loft area needs to be clear before work is carried out.

Ventilation**What we do:**

Where new electrical works, kitchen or bathrooms are to be upgraded, a suitable energy efficient ventilation system will be installed to assist in the prevention of condensation.

Your responsibilities:

You must remove any personal belongings from the area affected before work starts.

Windows**What we do:**

We will install modern windows which will be fully draft proofed and double glazed where possible. We try and install styles which will require minimal upkeep as far as is possible.

In conservation areas choices may be restricted by planning conditions and therefore wooden framed windows are often fitted.

Your responsibilities:

You should remove blinds and curtains before your new windows can be fitted.

You should also remove ornaments and plants from window sills.

Other Improvements

We also undertake a range of other improvements, including electrical testing, upgrade of smoke detectors, Radon testing, undertaking asbestos surveys and applying fascia over-cladding to the exterior of the house for instance.

In these situations, you require to make relatively few adjustments, if any, and the contractors' staff will advise if furniture needs to be moved. The contractors will do this.

These improvements are intended to improve the quality of our properties and the comfort and safety of your home.

Contractors' Duties

We will employ a contractor to carry out the improvement works.

When their staff are in your home, they will use dust sheets, as required.

At the end of each working day, we will ensure that your home is left in a clean, liveable condition.

You will not be left without heating or water or cooking facilities overnight.

Depending on the type of work that is being carried out in your home, it is possible you may have to move some of your belongings so that we can carry out and complete the works.

Items such as ornaments, furniture and curtains may need to be moved or put away.

You may also have to have your carpets rolled back.

When we visit you, we will tell you what you need to do before work can start.

If you need help to do this and have nobody who can help, you we will arrange for our Team Leader (Housing Support) to help wherever possible.

Most people prefer to stay in their homes whilst works are being carried out.

If you have any concerns about this, please let our staff know as soon as you receive our first letter, or as soon as possible.

We will then discuss your concerns with you and how we can help.

This may include your moving into a temporary furnished property or spending a few days with relatives.

If you have any pets, it is your responsibility to ensure that they are safe whilst we are working in your home, although we will assist wherever possible.

Your co-operation is essential during the time that we are working in your home.

You can help by allowing us reasonable access, packing away ornaments and moving items of furniture where possible.

Safety Issues

Depending on the type of works that are carried out in your home, the first week of the work is often more disruptive.

We will try to reduce any disruption, but would like to make you aware that there could be:

- Dust, debris and noise during the work.
- Electrical power tools and cables in your home.

For these reasons, you will need to make sure that your children, or their friends, do not play with any tools or building materials.

You must keep your pets safe.

Completion of the Work

On completing the work, we will give you a tenant satisfaction survey to complete.

This information helps us to improve our services in the future.

We can assist you to complete the form, on request.

We will also organise focus groups occasionally and may invite you to come along and share your experiences with our staff. Focus groups are simply small groups of tenants sharing ideas with housing staff.

Please note that repair works cannot be undertaken at the same time as improvements are carried out and repair requests should be made to our Customer Services section as normal.

Customer Services:

- Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall.
- Telephone: 01856873535.

Housing Management Section:

- Housing Services, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall.
- Telephone: 01856873535.
- Email: housing@orkney.gov.uk
- Emergency out of hours repairs service: 01856873430.

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