



NORTH STAR

Creating homes, building futures



Repairs Handbook

www.northstarhg.co.uk

Quick reference guide

You can report a repair to us in two main ways:



Online at www.northstarhg.co.uk

Follow the on-screen instructions to report a repair and log the details. We'll take it from there.



Calling our Customer Service Team on 03000 11 00 11.

When you call, please provide us with your full details, including contact numbers and full details of the repair.

How will this guide help?

Find out:

- which repairs are your responsibility as a tenant
- which repairs we carry out as your landlord
- how to identify what the problem is (so we can send the correct tradesperson, with the right equipment)
- different ways you can report your repairs i.e. our website allowing you 24 hour access.

By following the instructions in this guide, you can help us respond to repairs quickly and get things back to normal as soon as possible.

We want to make sure that all of your home repairs are sorted as soon as possible!

Our commitment to you

All of our staff and contractors will:

- be polite and courteous
- behave in a professional manner at all times
- respond positively to tenants' complaints
- be respectful of you and your home
- introduce themselves and provide proof of identity
- agree a suitable appointment
- aim to complete the repair first time.

We are committed to providing all of our tenants with the best possible service with minimum disruption.

North Star responsibility

We have legal responsibilities as a landlord to carry out certain repairs. Laws can sometimes change, which means some of the areas we are responsible for might change as well. This could mean that a repair we carried out in the past is now your responsibility or vice versa.

If you are ever in doubt about whose responsibility a specific repair is, please contact us, we will always be happy to talk you through it.

Your responsibility

Because you take pride in your home, we expect you to take care of your home by reporting any repairs as soon as possible and making sure that no-one else damages your home. There are also some repairs that are your responsibility as a tenant.

The tables on the following pages provide a list of common repairs and shows who is responsible for that repair. Before you contact us, please check the list so that you are sure the repair is North Star's responsibility.

This will save you time in getting the problem fixed. If however you are in any doubt, or the repair is not listed, please call 03000 11 00 11.

Who is responsible for what repairs?

Previous tenants' improvements that North Star will consider leaving in an empty property and take future responsibility for include:

- showers
- kitchens
- bathrooms
- doors

If these items break, they may only be replaced with standard/ available items and North Star will not make good any decorative wall coverings, for example tiles or wallpaper.

Items that North Star will consider leaving in the property but gifting to the new tenant with a disclaimer to say it is now your item and we won't repair/replace it, will be non-standard fixtures, including:

- sheds
 - laminate flooring
 - carpets, lino and floor tiles
- paving
 - water butts
 - alarms



Alterations to your home

In line with our tenancy agreement, you have the right to make alterations and improvements to their homes with prior written consent. Whilst you remain the tenant you will be responsible for the repairs and maintenance of these items.

Examples of improvements often carried out are:

- electric showers
 - sheds
 - fire surrounds
 - laminate flooring
- kitchens
 - bathrooms
 - doors

It is important that you grant us access to carry out any repairs in accordance with our tenancy agreement so that we can keep your property in good condition. Please contact us in confidence if there is any reason why you would decline access for repairs. We can then work with you to ensure that work can be carried out at a time that suits you.

Repairs table

		US	YOU
	Adaptations for disabled people as a result of recommendation by Social Services.	✓	
Damp, mould and condensation	Using repairs information to identify properties which may be prone to damp, mould and condensation.	✓	
	Developing planned works schemes to eradicate damp, mould and condensation from properties.	✓	
	To help you identify the type of any dampness in your home, please refer to the helpful information and advice on our website.		✓
	If you consider the damp, mould and condensation to be widespread, please report it on our website, which is outside of the normal way you report repairs.		✓
	Removing small areas of mould, e.g., patches around windows etc. by wiping down (see the website for guidance on how to do this safely).		✓
	Removing any areas of mould, however small, that you are not comfortable in wiping down yourself.	✓	
	Removing more widespread areas of damp, mould and condensation or anything of concern.	✓	
Bathrooms	Baths, bath panels, taps, shower trays, toilet pan cistern, flushing systems. See Note 1 below	✓	
	Bathroom fittings (towel rails etc), plugs and chains for sinks, basins and baths.		✓
	Toilet seat and fitting See Note 2 below		✓
Note 1: If the toilet is blocked because of inappropriate use, it is your responsibility.			
Note 2: We will not replace a toilet seat as it's your responsibility.			
Decoration	Internal decoration, external decoration (excluding cyclical work), curtain fixtures, removing and replacing radiators for decorating.		✓

Repairs table

		US	YOU
Doors	Door bells (excluding communal door entry systems), new door draught excluders, extra security door locks, door name plates, door adjustment following new carpets.		✓
	Door locks (internal and external). See Note 3 below Door entry systems, door frames, door fittings (inc. handles, letterbox, spyhole and chain).	✓	
Note 3: You will be responsible if your keys are lost or stolen, or if you are locked out. You will also be responsible for any repairs as a result of us needing to gain access.			
Electrical items	Electric plugs, electric meter and supply of electricity.		✓
	Wiring, sockets and light fittings. See Note 4 below	✓	
	Hard-wired smoke alarms.	✓	
	Battery-operated carbon monoxide detectors and battery smoke alarms.		✓
	Extractor fans, storage heaters, emergency lighting (communal), cooker connection point, pumps, immersion heater.	✓	
	Storage heaters.	✓	
	Cookers, cooker - disconnection and reconnection.		✓
	House alarms (installed by North Star).	✓	
Note 4: Bulbs, fluorescent tubes and starters are your responsibility.			
Gas	Supply of gas and gas meter (excluding gas meter box doors).		✓

Repairs table

		US	YOU
Floors	Floorboards/concrete floors.	✓	
	Floor tiles. See Note 5 below		✓
	Laminate flooring (permission must be obtained prior to installing).		✓
	Lino and carpet.		✓
Note 5 - We will remove floor tiles/ sheet flooring free of charge and will make sure that a floor leveller is applied. Replacing floor coverings (including laminate) remains your responsibility)			
Kitchens	Kitchen fittings and worktops as a result of normal wear and tear.	✓	
	Kitchen cupboards, cupboard drawers, cupboard door catches, handles and hinges.	✓	
	Installation of bayonet fittings following customer purchased items. See Note 6 below		✓
Note 6- Any gas work undertaken in your home must be carried out by a 'Gas Safe' registered person.			
Outside the property	Communal areas such as lifts and stairs, clothes posts provided by North Star, retaining walls and paths in the garden.	✓	
	Garages excluding tenant erected units and wooden sheds	✓	
Pipes and Drains	Downpipe (soil/ rain water), drains & gully surrounds, gulley grates, drain blockage. (Unless drain misuse)	✓	
Outside the property	Garages excluding tenant erected units.		✓

Repairs table

		US	YOU
Plumbing	Water supply - internal and from the ferrule (tap normally located in the front path).	✓	
	Water supply - external and up to the ferrule – contact Northumbrian Water or Hartlepool Water.		✓
	Hot and cold storage tanks, wash hand basin. See Note 7 below	✓	
Note 7 - Where the basin is blocked because of inappropriate disposal, clearing the blockage is your responsibility			
Roofs	TV aerials except for those installed in communal areas.		✓
	Chimney sweep.	✓	
	Chimney/chimney stacks, roof structure and coverings, guttering, rainwater, pipes and clips, fascia, soffits, barge boards and roof lights.	✓	
Staircases	Staircases, banisters and handrails.	✓	
Walls, canopies and ceilings	Main air vents, external walls and rendering, foundations, canopies over doors and windows, major plaster work, wall tiles and grouting.		
	Minor repairs to plaster work.		✓
Windows	Window locks to provide extra security, glazing. See Note 8 below		✓
	Window frames and sills, window fittings, window sash cord.	✓	
Note 8- We will replace glazing when you have been a victim of crime, and you have been given a crime reference number, which can be verified with the local police.			

Gas servicing

To keep your heating system in perfect working order, and you and your home safe, we need to carry out a gas appliance service each year. It is your responsibility to allow one of our fully qualified and registered gas safe engineers reasonable access to your home to carry out this service.

No smoking

North Star has a duty of care of the health and safety of our staff and contractors whilst they are working. We therefore ask you to do everything you can to keep your home smoke free whilst our staff and contractors are attending a repair or home visit. If you don't assist us with this our workforce has the right to leave without undertaking any work, this will delay the completion of your repair or home visit.

Reporting a repair



Before you report a repair make sure that you have checked:

- is the repair my responsibility? **(page 3)**
- you have your contact details and know when we can gain access to carry out the repairs.



You can report a repair in any of the following ways:

1. Online at **www.northstarhg.co.uk**. Follow the on screen instruction to identify the repair and log details. We will take it from there.
2. By phoning our Customer Service Line on **03000 11 00 11**. When you call, please provide us with your full details, including contact numbers and full details of the repair.
3. A 24-hour service is also provided for emergency repairs. All other repairs can be reported during normal office hours: **9am-5pm Monday to Friday**.
4. Visit your local office **(by appointment only)**
5. Via email: **customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk**.

How to report a repair

When you contact us, we will ask for:

- Your name and address.
- A contact telephone number.
- The times when it is convenient for us to carry out your repair.

Reporting a repair

Outside of normal working hours

We provide emergency cover between 5pm-9am, Monday to Friday and over the weekends and on bank holidays. If you require assistance, please call 03000 11 00 11. This will take you through to our emergency 24hr service line.

customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk is our out of hours emergency email address.

This is checked regularly for messages when our offices are closed. It is provided as an alternative to the emergency telephone number, for people who have difficulty using the phone.

This number must only be used to report emergency repairs.

The emergency out of hours service operates between:

- 5pm-9am Monday to Friday.
- 5pm on Friday to 9am on Monday.
- 24-hour cover on all bank holidays.

When reporting an emergency, please provide as much information as possible about the nature of the emergency. Where the repair is your responsibility but qualifies as an emergency, it may still possible to call out a North Star engineer, although we may charge for this service.

If we attend a emergency repair and can't gain access to your property, it wastes time and money. We want to provide you the best service possible and a waste of our resources may prevent us from providing an improved service and may lead to us charging you for this appointment.

How to report a repair

Using the out-of-hours emergency service

This service provides out-of-hours emergency repair cover. We may only be able to make safe on the first visit and may need to return to complete repairs. This service is only available where the repair poses a serious health and safety risk or where there is serious danger to people or property.

Emergency repairs

These are repairs that affect your health and safety. We will carry out these repairs or make safe within 24 hours or sooner depending on the nature of the repair.

Examples of emergency repairs are:

- losing all electrical power
- blocked main drain
- blocked toilet if only one available
- burst pipes
- dangerous structures
- complete heating failure where no back up heating is available (winter months only)
- gas leaks
- lack of security to the property.

Urgent repairs

We will carry out or make safe urgent repairs within three working days.

Examples of emergency repairs are:

- leaking roof
- loss of hot water supply or heating when no back up supply is available
- toilet not flushing (where more than one toilet available)
- water leaks that can not be contained.

Reporting a repair

Routine repairs

These are non-urgent repairs that we will complete within 30 working days. These are generally jobs that can be left without causing serious inconvenience.

Examples of these repairs are:

- indoor joinery repairs to doors, window frames, general woodwork
- small plumbing jobs such as dripping taps or overflow running
- repairs to fittings such as kitchen worktops and cupboards
- gates and fencing.

We aim to fit in with times you give us to call. If you have made an appointment and subsequently find that you can not be in at the agreed time, please contact our customer service department to arrange an alternative time.

This means that the appointment can be given to someone else and we can complete your repair as soon as possible at a suitable time.

What happens next?

- As soon as you report your repair, we will agree a repair appointment with you based on how urgent the repair is.
- If you report your repair online or by the out of hours service, we will contact you to arrange an appointment as soon as we receive your request.

When are appointments available?

Repairs will normally be carried out during normal working hours 8am-5pm Monday to Friday. Emergency repairs will be completed outside of these hours.

When arranging your repair appointment, you can choose from the following times:

- All day - between 8am-5pm.
- Morning - between 8am-12pm.
- Afternoon - between 12pm-5pm.

How soon will my repair be carried out?

Priority may be given to vulnerable residents based on an understanding of their needs. We will carry out every repair as soon as we can, but as a minimum we guarantee the following timescales.

1. Emergency repairs - within 24 hours

Where there is a risk to health and safety or a real danger to people or property.

2. Urgent repairs - within three working days

Where the problem is a significant inconvenience to you, but does not pose a danger e.g. no hot water.

3. Routine repairs - within 30 working days

Where the problem is not a significant inconvenience e.g. a partial loss of electrics - up to two sockets or lights not working

As soon as you report your repair, we will prioritise it based on the information you provide. The most urgent repairs will be carried out first.

How can I get my repair dealt with sooner?

The best way to get your repair dealt with is to report it as soon as it becomes a problem and to make sure you provide us with all the information we need when you first contact us.

It is important you do not exaggerate the urgency of your repair to get it dealt with sooner.

Emergency repairs cost more money to carry out than other types of repairs, so if you log an unnecessary emergency repair you may prevent us from attending a real emergency.

It is also possible that if you exaggerate the priority of your repair, the extra cost incurred with the work could be passed back to you.

Charging for repairs

Sometimes there may be a charge for carrying out a repair. This may be if we carry out work that is your responsibility, if we carry out work additional work at an extra cost, if the work is required as a result of negligence or if we don't gain access to carry out a repair at an agreed time.

We will always tell you about any charge before we carry out the work and try to give you a rough estimate of the cost. For emergency repairs, you will receive the bill after completion. For other types of work, we may ask for payment before the work is undertaken.

Why does North Star have a recharge policy?

We want to ensure that we are clear and consistent with tenants about repairs we are responsible for, and what repairs you as a tenant are responsible for.

The repairs and maintenance service provided is funded from rents paid by all our tenants. To be fair and consistent to all, we will recharge those individuals who neglect their homes or cause wilful damage. It is also possible that if you exaggerate the priority of your repair, the extra cost incurred with the work could be passed back to you.

Repairs that we will charge you for:

- When we carry out work that is your responsibility, e.g. replacing lost keys.
- When we undertake additional work at an extra cost, e.g. additional fencing.
- When we carry out work that is our responsibility but has been caused by your negligence, e.g. replacing damaged doors.
- When we are unable to gain access to carry out a repair on an agreed day.

Advice on home safety and security

Gas Servicing

Stay safe! Around 35 people die in the UK each year as a result of faulty gas appliances. Don't let it happen to you.

To ensure your safety, one of our qualified Gas Safe engineers will need to carry out an annual gas safety check on your property. We will make every effort to arrange appointments that are convenient to you, so please co-operate with us to access your home.

During the gas service we will also service your smoke alarm and CO detector (where applicable)

The law says that, as your landlord, we will carry out these checks on all gas appliances in our properties. We can, as a last resort, take legal action to gain access to your property to carry out safety checks and this could mean additional costs for you.

What to do if you smell gas or fumes?

- Phone Transco immediately on freephone **0800 111 999** - the team will deal with any report of a gas leak, free of charge.
- Contact North Star on **03000 11 00 11**.
- If possible, turn off gas supply at the meter (unless the meter is located in a cellar or basement, in which case do not enter).
- **DO NOT** turn the gas back on until the escape has been repaired and you are told to do so.
- Turn off all gas appliances. **DO NOT** use until a gas engineer says you can.
- Open all windows and doors to ventilate the property.
- **DO NOT** use any electrical appliances or switch on or off any switches.
- Extinguish all naked flames.
- **DO NOT** smoke.

Advice on home safety and security

Electricity consumer units (fuse board)

Your home will have either an electricity consumer unit or fuse board, which supplies power to all the electrical devices in your home.

- It has a main **ON/OFF** switch (normally in red).
- It may also have a “**trip switch**” or **RCD** (residual-current device).
- It contains either fuses or **MCBs** (miniature circuit breakers) - these are labelled with the area of the house they are supplying e.g. lights up, lights down, cooker etc.
- In normal conditions, all these circuit breakers will switch to the **ON** position.
- In the case of a fault, one of the circuit breakers will switch to the **OFF** position. This will help you identify where the fault is.

If you lose all power:

1. Check that there has not been a power cut (i.e. have your neighbours lost power too), or if you have credit on your prepay meter.
2. Turn off all circuits if controlled by **MCBs**. (miniature circuit breakers)
3. Reset the switch to the **ON** position and reset each **MCB** in turn.
4. If the loss of power is due to a faulty circuit, that **MCB** switch will “**trip**” (turn OFF) when you try to turn it on again. If this happens, please report the fault to us on **03000 11 00 11**.

If you lose power to your plug sockets:

If none of your plug sockets work, but other circuits are still working, it may be because one of your appliances has tripped the switch.

1. Unplug all appliances.
2. At the consumer unit or fuse board reset the **MCB**, which supplies power to the sockets.
3. Begin to plug your appliances back in one by one.
4. If one of your appliances is faulty, it will trip the switch and you will need to repair or replace this appliance.
5. If the circuit will **NOT** reset, with **ALL** appliances unplugged, call us on **03000 11 00 11** as there may be a fault with the circuit.

Advice on home safety and security

If you lose power to your lights:

If all or some (i.e. upstairs or downstairs) of your lights lose power, an individual circuit breaker may have tripped or a light bulb may have blown.

- If your lighting is controlled by **MCBs**, reset the tripped **MCB**, test each light and replace any blown light bulbs. If your lighting **MCB** won't reset, call us on **03000 11 00 11**.

Damp, mould and condensation

The development of mould in affected areas is often the first sign there is too much condensation in your home. Condensation forms when excess moisture in the air is cooled far enough to form droplets of water on surfaces such as windows or external walls.

Condensation often takes place where air movement is restricted, such as in corners of rooms, behind items of furniture placed against walls and even in wardrobes. Condensation is probably the biggest cause of dampness in properties. It usually occurs during the colder autumn/winter months; reducing it contributes enormously towards a 'healthy home.' Condensation can be reduced by producing less moisture, removing excess moisture, improving ventilation and using heat to remove moisture.

Below are some practical steps to help:

- When cooking, cover boiling pans and make sure there is enough ventilation by using an extractor fan or opening a vent or window. Make sure your kitchen door is closed to keep moisture out of other areas of your home.
- Tumble dryers must be vented to the outside, either through an opened window or an approved hole in the wall.
- Whenever you can, dry clothes outside. When this isn't possible, dry them in the bathroom with an extractor fan turned on or a window open to increase air flow.
- When you run a bath, keep bathroom doors closed to stop moisture reaching other areas of your home.
- Try to keep the temperature in your home fairly constant.
- Increase ventilation in your home by opening trickle vents on windows or opening a window if it's safe to do so.

Remember to visit our damp, mould and condensation area on the website for more detailed information and helpful advice.

Advice on home safety and security

Door entry systems

Door entry systems are generally found in blocks of flats and communal entrances. They offer residents more security by controlling who has access to the flats.

- To give visitors access, you can operate the main external door by pressing the door entry button in your flat.
- When you sign your tenancy, you will be given a key fob and shown how the system works. Replacement or additional fobs can be obtained, but you may have to pay for them.
- It is very important that the communal entrance door is kept locked at all times and is never propped open. If you notice a fault, you should call us immediately on 03000 11 00 11.

Fire safety In the event of a fire:

If you live in a block:

- Know your fire safety plan. Protect yourself and your family and make sure you know what to do in the event of a fire.

If you live in a house or bungalow:

- Close internal doors - closed doors can hold back a fire and prevent it spreading more quickly.
- Follow your escape plan and evacuate everyone from the building immediately. Don't go back inside for any reason.

Dial 999 from a mobile or a neighbour's phone.

Smoke detectors/ alarms

Smoke detectors need to be cleaned and tested regularly to make sure they will operate effectively. Most smoke alarms can be cleaned using a soft brush adaptor on the end of a vacuum cleaner.

It is important that they remain free from dust and grease. Care should be taken not to damage any of the internal parts. Never allow a smoke detector that is mains-operated to become wet.

Advice on home safety and security

Asbestos

Asbestos was widely used in construction during the 20th century because of its strength and fire-resistant properties. As a result, many North Star properties built between 1900 and 1999 may contain asbestos.

At this time, there was no awareness of the risk to health posed by some forms of asbestos if handled incorrectly.

Asbestos materials are unlikely to release fibres into the air or threaten your health if they are left undamaged. There is only a risk to health if they are disturbed by building work.

We believe it is important to let you know where asbestos may be present in your home. By working together, we can keep the risk posed by asbestos to a minimum.

Asbestos is dangerous if it is mishandled, broken, drilled or cut. If you are planning any DIY work in your home contact us first so we can advise you.

Places in your home where you may come across asbestos

- Artex (usually in ceiling and wall coverings).
- Plastic floor tiles (usually on kitchen floors).
- Some gas central heating boiler units.
- Pipe insulation coverings (similar in appearance to rope wrapped around the pipe).
- Soffits and fascias.
- Ceiling and roof tiles.

Advice on home safety and security

Leaking,
burst, frozen or
blocked pipes.

What to do when:

Pipes leak

- Place a dish or bowl under the leak.
- Pull back carpets.
- Lay down newspaper or towels to absorb the dampness.
- Contact North Star Customer Service 03000 11 00 11.

Pipes burst

- Turn off the water at the main stop cock and any gate valves from the water tank.
- Switch off any water heaters.
- Open all taps to drain water from the system.
- Contact North Star Customer Service 03000 11 00 11.

Pipes freeze

- Turn off the water at the main stop tap and open the cold taps.
- It is best to leave the pipes frozen, but you may try to thaw the pipe e.g. using hot water bottles or a hair dryer.
- **DO NOT USE A BLOW TORCH.**
- Take care to thaw from one end and not from the middle.
- Contact North Star Customer Service 03000 11 00 11.

Ceilings bulge

- To minimise the risk of a section of ceiling falling down, place a bucket directly under the bulge to retain any water that may fall.
- Where it is possible and safe to do so, puncture the ceiling with a small object to allow the water to escape and collect in the bucket.
- Contact North Star Customer Service 03000 11 00 11.

Note if electric fittings get wet

- **DO NOT TOUCH.**
- Turn off the electricity at the consumer unit.

Advice on home safety and security

Leaking,
burst, frozen or
blocked pipes.

Clearing a sink or bath blockage.

- Remove most of the water using a suitable container.
- Hold a cloth firmly over the overflow opening to seal the gap- this will create a vacuum when the plunger is used and prevent water under pressure exiting the system.
- Place a plunger over the drain hole.
- Pump the plunger up and down rapidly five or six times.
- Remove the plunger and note if the water drains more quickly.
- If it does not, repeat the process several times or until the blockage is clear.
- Contact North Star Customer Service Line as a last resort.

Clearing a blocked WC.

- If the toilet pan is already full remove most of the water into a suitable bucket using a jug or bowl.
- Push the toilet brush or plunger to the bottom of the pan and pump up and down vigorously about 10 times. This creates a vacuum and pressure which may shift the blockage.
- Check by flushing the toilet to see whether the blockage has gone. You may need to repeat the process several times before the toilet flushes normally.
- **DO NOT USE PLUNGERS WITH A METAL DISK**, as they may chip or crack the toilet bowl.
- Contact North Star Customer Service Line as a last resort.

The main office for North Star is located in Stockton-on-Tees at:

Endeavour House
St. Mark's Court
Thornaby
Stockton-on-Tees
TS17 6QN

Telephone: 03000 11 00 11 (local rate number)

For emergency repairs outside of normal office hours telephone: 03000 11 00 11

General enquiries email: customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk

Opening hours Monday to Friday: 9:00am to 5:00pm

Closed on all bank holidays

Contacting us

You can contact us in a number of ways:



Telephone

03000 11 00 11 (local rate number)



Email

customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk



LanguageLine

LanguageLine is a service for people who do not speak English.

To access LanguageLine call: 0845 310 9900



Writing or visiting

North Star Housing Group
Endeavour House
St. Mark's Court
Thornaby
Stockton-on-Tees
TS17 6QN

North Star Housing Group
Enterprise House
Harmire Enterprise Park
Harmire Road
Barnard Castle
County Durham
DL12 8XT



Website

www.northstarhg.co.uk