

Our customer charter

We review this charter to ensure the information included is up-to-date and the latest version is published online.



Welcome to your Cottsway home. We hope you have settled in, unpacked the kettle and teabags and are enjoying your new place.

And if you are an existing customer looking for a refresher on what we offer, welcome back!

This quick guide covers off some of the questions customers ask us the most. It also captures some of our promises to you and what we expect in return.

So in here, you will find things such as how quickly our repair van will be outside your house if you are unfortunate enough to spring a leak, what support we can offer if you would like help finding a job or why we

expect customers to cut their own grass (in short, we do not make a profit and so not offering everything keeps rents low for everyone).

It also looks at what to do in the unlikely event that you are not happy with the service you are getting.

Of course, if you are a shared owner things are different for you and we will have explained everything you need to know when you moved in. You may find our Home User Guide useful.

If you have any comments on the guide, we would love to hear from you. Just email us at contact@cottsway.co.uk



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Our general approach

Our house is your home, and our core approach is to always keep that in mind when we make decisions and when we are in contact with you.

We will:

- Live up to our values, and treat you fairly and with respect
- Keep your data safe in line with our privacy policy
- Give you a named contact on serious issues
- Formally consult you over any significant changes to costs or your tenancy agreement
- Try and answer as many queries as possible the first time you contact us
- Offer lots of ways to get in touch and find information, including online, on the phone, in writing or via our portal
- Meet our legal obligations, including data, financial, health and safety and equality laws.

In return we expect you will:

- Treat our staff with courtesy and respect
- Take pride in your home and garden
- Be a good neighbour
- Undertake some basic upkeep yourself, such as internal decoration, grass cutting and simple small repairs including blocked toilets and lightbulb replacement.
- Pay your rent on time, every time.

The core service areas

Beyond putting an affordable, well-maintained roof over your head, we also play a role in ensuring the place around it is one you want to live, work, play and learn in.

We provide services for customers looking for employment advice, help to move home if you have a baby on the way or other changes in circumstances, and opportunities to influence our decisions.

And because life sometimes throws things up along the way, we also offer budgeting and financial support, abuse and anti-social behaviour experts and mediators.

This guide will help you understand how quickly we can and will respond, and what will happen when you contact us with a specific issue you would like us to help with.



Aids and adaptations

We want everyone to be able to remain in their home and enjoy living independently for as long as they wish to.

If your health needs change, you can apply for adaptations to be made such as the installation of grab rails, ramps and walk-in showers.

Minor adaptations

If you want a simple aid or adaptation to your property such as handrails, grab rails or lever taps, please contact us directly.

For more information on, or to request a minor adaptation, please contact us:

Call: **01993 890000**

Email: **contact@cottsway.co.uk**



Aids and adaptations

Major adaptations

If you require a major adaptation such as a level access shower, stairlift or adapted kitchen, an occupational therapist's assessment is required.

If you are already in contact with an occupational therapist, please ask them to carry out an assessment of your home. If you do not have an occupational therapist, please contact your local council (details right).

- The occupational therapist will visit your home to assess what adaptations are required and will let us and your local authority know
- If we think the requested adaptations are suitable for your home, we will grant landlord consent for the work to be carried out
- You may be able to get help to pay for some or all of the costs involved for the adaptations needed through a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). However, a DFG is means-tested and will depend on your financial situation and the work needed.

If we do not agree that the requested work is suitable, or if we think that a move to another property with existing adaptations might be better for you, we will discuss this with you and the occupational therapist.

To apply for a major adaptation, please contact your local council:

Oxfordshire County Council

 **0345 050 7666**

 **www.oxfordshire.gov.uk**

Gloucestershire County Council

 **01452 426868**

 **www.gloucestershire.gov.uk**

Worcestershire County Council

 **01905 768053**

 **www.worcestershire.gov.uk**

Swindon Borough Council

 **01452 425000**

 **www.swindon.gov.uk**

Wiltshire Council

 **0300 4560111**

 **adults.wiltshire.gov.uk**

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

We want all customers to be able to enjoy their home in peace and safety. Let us know if you are suffering from anti-social behaviour.

A trained member of our team will deal with your report and will acknowledge your enquiry within one working day.

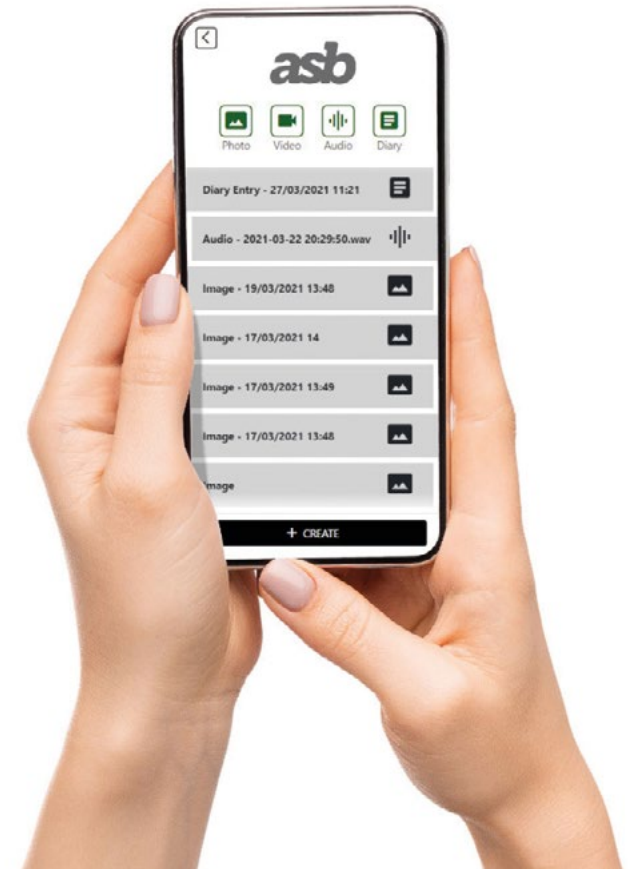
If we need more information to resolve your issue, we will contact you within:

- One working day if the ASB is very serious, for example domestic abuse or racist graffiti
- Five working days for other types of ASB.

We will:

- Discuss the issues and assess the impact the ASB is having on you, before agreeing an action plan and clear outcomes of what we can/will do
- Provide an out of hours ASB 'hotline' service to enable you to talk to experts who are there to simply listen, take witness statements or diary notes to support your case. They will provide follow up calls in the evening or on a weekend if you need a little extra support out of hours

- Offer access to the ASB app free of charge. This app allows you share information with us, attach photographic and video evidence and record noise that is causing you distress. We can then use it as evidence to help us take action
- Provide diary sheets so you can record incidents of ASB
- Provide help and support while we manage your case and do all we can to make acting as a witness as easy as possible
- Always contact you before closing a case and give you seven days in which to respond with any further comments
- Ask for your feedback about how we handled your case.



Tenancy support

New customers

If you are a new Cottsway customer and need help to get your tenancy off to a good start, we can help.

Our Pre-Tenancy Support Officer can work with you for up to three months to make sure you understand what it means to hold a tenancy and to help you get your finances in order from the start, including support to claim eligible benefits and setting up utilities.

All new customers can also attend our monthly 'Tenancy Ready' workshop to make sure you have all the information you need to make a success of your tenancy.

Existing customers

If you, or a Cottsway customer you know, are struggling to cope with daily living and you are worried about the impact on your tenancy, we can help.

Our Tenancy Support and Sustainment Officers are here to help you maintain your tenancy, so if you need help please get in touch. We can help with a wide range of housing problems and work in partnership with various external agencies to get you the support you need.

Contact:

If you contact the team, or someone else does on your behalf, we will:

- Get in touch within one working day. This will usually be a phone call
- Respond to your phone calls, voicemails, emails and social media posts within five working days
- Respond to letters within a maximum of five working days
- Arrange a home visit at a time to suit you.

Home visits:

When we visit you at home, we will:

- Always wear an identity badge
- Treat you and your home with respect
- Agree actions that we will take together
- Ask you to sign an information sharing agreement so we can talk to other people on your behalf.

Partnership working

To help you deal with any problems, we will work with partners who can also provide support. This may include social services, Citizens Advice, SSAFA (the Armed Forces charity), occupational therapists and Age UK.

We will ask for your agreement in writing before we contact any partner agency.

Feedback and complaints

If we get anything wrong all Cottsway customers can expect a high standard of service from us. If you feel we have got something wrong or given you poor service, please tell us.

If we make a mistake, we want to have the opportunity to put things right, quickly and fairly. We welcome your feedback / service requests - your views are important and will us help to improve.

You can give us your feedback or make a complaint on our website, by phone, email, via social media, letter or in person. Someone can also act on your behalf.

If you make a complaint, we will:

- Acknowledge it quickly
- Ask you at the start what outcome you are hoping for
- Inform you of what action we will take to sort your complaint
- Resolve your complaint quickly and fairly. You will have the chance to discuss it in person with us, and can bring a relative, friend or advisor if you wish
- Phone you once we have resolved your complaint to ask you how satisfied you are with how we handled it. This call is made by an independent organisation who has not previously been involved in the process, so you can speak freely and honestly.

On occasions we may not accept a complaint. If this is the case, we will explain why in writing, and you will have the right to bring the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

How we respond to feedback and complaints

Complaints (stage one)

We will inform you who has taken on your case.

Our aim is to reach a satisfactory conclusion within 10 working days of you first raising the issue. However, if you remain dissatisfied after this time, your case will be escalated (stage two).

If new issues are raised during this stage of the investigation, the complaint handler will try to incorporate these (if relevant) into their investigation and subsequent response. However, if the new issue(s) will cause an unreasonable delay to the stage 1 response, it will be logged as a new complaint.

Complaint escalation (stage two)


If you remain dissatisfied with the solutions offered after 10 days, a senior manager will review your case. They will call or email you, depending on your preference, to introduce themselves and will have 20 working days in which to resolve your case.


This review will involve investigating all the previous steps taken to get to this stage and you will receive a written response with full details of the findings.


Housing Ombudsman Service

If you are still unhappy with the result after stage two has been completed, you may take your complaint to the independent Housing Ombudsman Service.

You can contact the Ombudsman:

 0300 111 3000

 www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

 Housing Ombudsman Service,
PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ

Customer engagement

We know that if we involve customers in developing services, then the result is better for everyone. This helps us to invest money on the things you want.

We offer a range of ways for you to get involved. And if you are kind enough to give up your time to provide feedback, we promise to listen.

Understanding our customers

To help us understand your needs, we will:

- Carry out customer satisfaction surveys on a rolling basis across a range of key services
- Respond positively to complaints and use your feedback to improve services
- Encourage you to share your views about our services and let you know how we have acted in response to your feedback
- Request information that will enable us to understand your needs, including any additional support needs.



Customer engagement

Empowering customers

To help you have your voice heard, we will:

- Provide you with a range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the delivery of our services, including involvement in scrutiny and co-regulation (this is the process of us working together to make sure Cottsway is doing what we should be on your behalf)
- Provide updates every three months about our performance
- Hold meetings and estate inspections in your neighbourhood so you can share ideas and concerns with your Neighbourhood Housing Officer
- Deliver community plans that meet local needs and help you to improve your neighbourhood
- Offer you training opportunities to build your skills and confidence so you can get the most out of being involved
- Provide digital training and loan you equipment to help you use digital services
- Provide information, events and venues that are accessible to everyone
- Meet reasonable expenses associated with your involvement.

Enabling communities to thrive

We know that living in a strong and safe community is important to our customers. To support communities, we will:

- Offer funding for community projects and personal development through the Cottsway Community Fund
- Support resident associations to make a difference in their communities through our support grants and staff time
- Be more visible, working together with partners to promote safer neighbourhoods, better community facilities and a community voice.



Customer service

If you have the need to contact us, our highly trained customer service team are here to help.

When you contact us, we will:

- Answer your call within 60 seconds where possible. Our aim is that this will happen on at least 90% of all calls
- Answer your query at the first point of contact. Our aim is this will happen on at least 80% of all enquires
- Reply to your social media contact within four hours during office hours
- Reply to enquires made by email or the website within one working day
- Respond to letters in five working days
- Record your contact on our systems
- Carry out some simple identification checks when you contact us so we know who we are talking to, to protect your data.



Equality, diversity and inclusion

At Cottsway we are fully committed to promoting the benefits of equality, diversity, and social inclusion. We want to ensure our customers and future customers can contact us and gain access to our services as easily as possible.

We will treat you fairly and with respect when accessing our services or seeking employment with us.

When you contact us, we will:

- Not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, maternity, race and ethnicity, religion or belief, or sexual orientation
- Value the fact that people have a right to their distinctive identities and value their uniqueness
- Ask you about your personal needs so we provide the right service for you.

When you access our services, we will:

- Provide translation facilities in different formats
- Provide Read Speaker (or similar voice software) on our websites
- Ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are central to our values when reviewing or developing strategies, policies and procedures
- Ensure any reported incidents of harassment, including hate crime, are investigated promptly and sensitively
- Consult, listen and involve you in developing services that recognise and value diversity.

When you work on our behalf, we will:

- Encourage a diverse membership on our board, committees, working groups and consultation bodies
- Provide training and awareness raising on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion for all our staff and engaged customers
- Ensure our contractors share and meet our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion
- Provide a supportive environment so that customers and staff have the opportunity to contribute to the provision and improvement of services
- Assess the impact of our policies and procedures on the different sectors of our communities.

Abuse and neglect


No one should suffer abuse, or the threat of abuse, in their home. If you believe there is an immediate risk of harm to yourself or someone else, or it is an emergency, you should always call 999.

If you, or someone you know who is a Cottsway customer, are suffering physical, emotional, sexual or any other kind of abuse, neglect or coercive behaviour, we will support you. We will:


- Discuss the situation immediately with you
- Talk to the victim within 24 hours of receiving the report and investigate fully
- Work with relevant agencies involved such as the police or the local authority
- Review the security of your home if necessary
- Take appropriate legal action against the person causing the abuse
- Provide support to find alternative accommodation if needed
- Regularly keep in touch with you to check how you are until the matter is resolved to your satisfaction.

Other support


Women's Aid: Provides information for women on a wide range of issues, such as housing, money, helping children and legal rights.

 0808 2000 247

Respect: Works with domestic violence perpetrators, male victims of domestic violence and young people's violence in close relationships.

 0845 122 8606

Action on Elder Abuse: Works to protect older people from abuse and neglect and supporting those experiencing, or at risk of, abuse.

 0808 808 8141

Managing money

We can all think of times when money has felt tight - whether it has been a cold winter and your fuel bill is larger than you expected, or perhaps the children all need school shoes at the same time you or your partner have become unemployed.



If you are worried about paying your rent, the best thing you can do for you and those you live with is tell us.

To help make paying your rent as easy as possible, we will:

- Give you the choice of checking your rent account balance online via the 'My Cottsway' portal (www.cottsway.co.uk/mycottsway), by phone or post
- Offer direct debits that can be taken on any working day. For convenience, this can be set up via the 'My Cottsway' portal
- Provide you with other easy ways to pay your rent online or by phone
- Provide an annual rent statement, to show the payments you have made so you know what you owe
- When we set rent charges each year, we will tell you in advance if your rent for the next 12 months is changing.

Our starting point is that we expect you to pay rent and any other charges in full and in advance. We do not make a profit, so not paying has a direct impact on the services and homes we can provide to other local residents.

If you do fall behind with your rent, we will:

- Contact you so you know what you owe
- Offer a realistic payment plan so you can catch up
- Offer a benefits check with our partners or signpost you to other specialist services if you need additional help. You may be entitled to financial help that you are not claiming for
- Offer a face-to-face meeting at your home, or a more convenient place of your choosing.

Remember we will take legal action if you do not clear your arrears. This is a last resort.

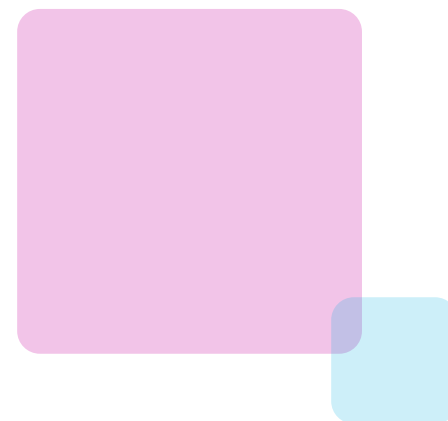
Moving in / out

It is an exciting time when you get the keys to your new home or have had a bid accepted on a property. But we appreciate you will also have lots of questions, so we are here to help.

Once you have had that message that tells you that you have successfully bid on one of our homes. Here is what will happen, and by when.

We will:

- Contact you within two working days of your successful bid
- Ask you to tell us who will be moving in with you
- Carry out a pre-tenancy check with you, so you have all the information about the property to ensure it is right for you. And that we have all the information we need about you and your household
- We offer new customers who require additional support, pre-tenancy support for the first three months to make sure your tenancy gets off to a good start
- Carry out a full 'health check' on your finances to make sure you can afford the home
- Invite you to a tenancy workshop to help understand what being a Cottsway tenant means
- Explain and give you a copy of the tenancy agreement so you can review it and share it with others you trust before you sign it
- Arrange for you to view the new home and discuss the offer
- Tell you how much rent and service charges you will pay each week
- Give you a date when you can move in
- Take your photo ID when you sign your new tenancy agreement
- Tell you about any repairs that we plan to do once you have moved in. We will agree with you a timescale for these to be done and stick to it
- Give you the contact details of your income and neighbourhood officers
- Tell you how to contact the energy companies to register as a new user
- Contact you within four weeks of signing up for your new home to book a welcome visit to check you have settled in.



Moving out

We know it is a busy time when you move home. To help manage the stresses of moving, there are a few simple things we would ask you to do before you pack your boxes and book your removals.

- Let us know if you are thinking about moving out. You can do this by contacting us at contact@cottsway.co.uk or by telephoning us on **01993 890000**
- We will always ask you to confirm your intention to leave us
- We will ask you where you are moving to and the reason why
- We will provide you with an information pack which gives you lots of help and advice about how to end your tenancy
- We will ask you to return your keys to us on the Monday following 28 days of your notice.



Our approach to damp and mould

If you are experiencing problems with damp and mould, please contact us for advice:

www.cottsway.co.uk/damp

There are some simple ways you can deal with condensation and mould in your home by reducing moisture in the air, improving ventilation and using heating efficiently.

If you've tried to reduce the moisture in your rented home and its not working, or if you have a problem with severe condensation or mould, please contact us.

There are a number of ways in which we can help:

- We'll ask you about the extent and the specific location of any issues
- We'll ask you to send us photographs of the problem areas
- Where necessary, we'll provide initial advice over the phone and arrange for any repairs that are evident
- If necessary, we'll work with you to arrange a convenient time to visit your home to assess the situation
- We'll aim to visit to do an assessment within 20 working days
- We'll contact you with our findings and intended actions within 10 working days of completing our assessment
- We'll follow up with you again within 6 months to check if the issue is resolved.

If you are a shared owner or leaseholder

You are responsible for dealing with condensation and mould in your home, once your property is older than 12 months.



Repairs and maintenance

We are jointly responsible for repairing and maintaining your home, including any communal areas around your home (eg stairs, lifts, parking areas, bin stores). Most communal repairs are dealt with within the time frames set out overleaf.

We keep all the housing we own and manage in excellent condition by:


- Providing an efficient and effective day-to-day repairs service
- Planning long-term programmes to repair and modernise homes
- Repairing empty homes ready for new tenants.

We maintain the structure of your home, and things like central heating, water heating, sanitary ware (toilet pans, cisterns and other fittings) and systems supplying gas, water and electricity. In some blocks of flats and other properties, we are also responsible for repairing or replacing shared installations such as lifts and lighting in communal areas.

How to report a routine or urgent repair:

 www.cottsway.co.uk

 contact@cottsway.co.uk

 01993 890000

Information we need when you report any repair

- Your name, full address and contact phone number.
- As much information as you can tell us about the problem. This helps our operative to prepare for your appointment. For example, many boilers have a display panel which will show a fault code if there is a problem. Please make a note of the code before reporting the problem to us as it will make arranging a repair easier and quicker.
- Any dates or times you cannot make, but please note that if you limit when you are available, it could delay us completing the repair.
- If you live in a block of flats, tell us where the issue is and if it causes a health and safety hazard to you or other residents.

If you are a shared owner or leaseholder

- If you live in a house, you are responsible for all repairs.
- If you live in a flat, you are responsible for everything inside the home, plus any land mentioned in the lease.
- We are responsible for maintaining shared and communal areas which you may contribute to via service charges (see page 31).
- Responsibility for repairs to maisonettes depends on the design and layout of the building – check your lease for details.

Repair priorities and examples

Routine repairs

We usually respond to the faults or repairs listed below within 20 working days. Sometimes it can take longer if it is something we are planning to do in the future anyway - for example, replacing a chain-link fence.

Examples of routine repairs

- Loss of heating during summer months (between 1 May to 31 October)
- Carpentry
- Brickwork repairs
- Dripping taps
- Extractor fan broken in a kitchen or bathroom
- Repairs to plasterwork
- Loss of one light/power socket
- Window handle broken to a communal landing window

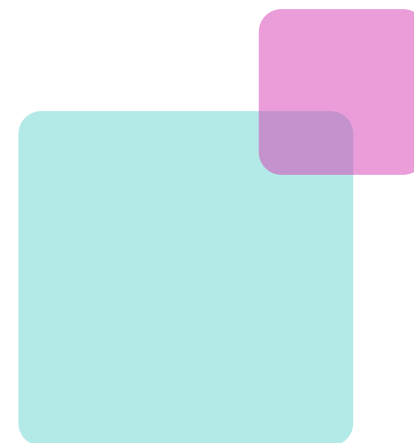
It is cheaper for us to do some larger repairs, such as replacing windows or gutters, on a whole block or estate at the same time, or street by street, rather than in one or two houses. This may sometimes delay us dealing with a routine fault you have reported. For example, if you have a faulty seal that is making a double-glazed window mist up, you may have to wait a bit longer than usual. When you report the problem, we will tell you if there will be any delay.

Urgent repairs

We aim to deal with the repairs listed below within five working days of you reporting the problem. If we cannot repair there and then, we will order replacement parts and arrange another appointment for us to complete the work as soon as the parts are available.

Examples of urgent repairs

- Partial loss of electrical power
- Faulty electrical smoke detectors, if we fitted them
- Total loss of hot water
- Toilet not flushing - where there is only one toilet. If there is more than one, we will treat this as a routine repair
- Tap that you cannot turn on or off
- Minor leak – for example, where you can catch the water from a leaking pipe in a container
- Constantly running overflow pipes
- Door-entry phone not working
- Loose or detached banister or handrail
- Outside light not working at a block of flats



Repair priorities and examples

Emergency repairs

We will make the situation safe or complete the faults or repairs listed below within 24 hours of you reporting the problem to us. You or someone over the age of 16 will need to be at your home when we arrive because we cannot provide a time slot for emergency repairs.

Examples of emergency repairs

- Total loss of electrical power (*where your service provider is not responsible*)
- Unsafe power, lighting, sockets or other electrical fittings
- Total loss of heating in winter months (*between 1 Nov and 30 Apr*)
- Making your home secure after a break-in or vandalism – we will need you to have obtained a crime reference number from the police
- Leaks that you cannot contain or ones effecting electrical fittings
- Dangerous structural faults
- Broken lock to a communal entrance door.

If you need an emergency repair, it is best to phone us. The number is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Repair priorities and examples

Gas leaks

If you smell gas, you should:

- Put out all flames, turn off the gas and open all windows so the fumes can escape
- Leave your home and call the National Gas Emergency Service free on 0800 111 999 – it is essential that you use a phone outside of your home because using one inside, even a mobile, could spark an explosion.

If you smell gas, you should not:

- Use any naked flames such as matches or cigarettes
- Turn on any electrical switches or use any phone inside the home.

To help prevent gas leaks, you must:

- Keep air vents clear so they do not become blocked
- Give us access to your home to carry out the annual gas safety check
- Report any gas appliance repairs to us immediately.

Repairs appointments

We book appointments to do repairs and offer morning or afternoon time slots. Please be aware if you are only available for limited times, we might not be able to do the repair in the usual timescale.

We would also remind you that we cannot offer this appointment system for emergency repairs.

Cancelling appointments

If we cannot keep an appointment with you, we will try to let you know as soon as possible but if we do not give you 24 hours' notice, we will give you £15. Where possible we will immediately rebook the appointment.

If you cannot make the appointment, please contact us as soon as possible to rearrange it. Please give us at least 24 hours' notice so we can offer the slot to another customer.

Planned improvements

We have a programme for refurbishing kitchens and bathrooms. We will contact you when our records show that yours is coming to the end of its predicted life. Once we have come to see it, we will let you know when you can expect to have the work done. Where possible, we give customer a choice of finishes from the range we have available.

Your annual gas safety check and service and other regular repairs

We have a legal duty to carry out a safety inspection and service once a year of all gas appliances we have provided in your home, as well as regular electrical safety checks. You must allow us access to carry these out. If you do not, we will seek a court order and you will have to pay the full cost of us doing that. We will also have to cut off the gas because we will not know if the supply and your appliances are safe.

Please remember this is for your personal safety. Do not put your life and the lives of your family and neighbours at unnecessary risk.

Repair responsibilities

The repairs you must do yourself

Although we repair many items in your home, we do not do everything, so the table below shows who is responsible for the main types of problems. This is a guide only and our repairs service is not limited to these items.

REPAIRS CATEGORY AND ITEM	Cottsway	You
Basin and sinks		
Leaking tap	✓	
Tap will not turn off	✓	
Blocked basin or sink waste		✓
Broken plug and/or chain, including missing ones		✓
Loose, cracked or broken basin	✓	
Bath and showers		
Leaking or faulty bath taps	✓	
Water leaking between the bath and the wall	✓	
Shower heads and hoses for electrical showers	✓	
Electric shower not working	✓	
Shower/bath waste blocked		✓

REPAIRS CATEGORY AND ITEM	Cottsway	You
Communal areas		
Faulty phone entry system	✓	
Damaged paths	✓	
Communal lighting faults	✓	
Broken window handles	✓	
Damaged doors/ locks	✓	
Damaged stair treads/banister rails	✓	
Damp, mould and condensation		
If you are having problems with damp and mould, we may visit your home to check them out. Some of these issues may be caused by inadequate ventilation of your home or insufficient heating. There are a number of things we can suggest to help manage this. Please get in touch for advice.	✓	✓

Repair responsibilities

REPAIRS CATEGORY AND ITEM	Cottsway	You
Doors		
Replacing keys or locks, including if you cannot get into your home because you have lost the keys		✓
Door bells		✓
Stiff or sticking door	✓	
Adjusting doors to allow for new floor coverings		✓
Water leaking between a door and the frame	✓	
Drainage		
Manhole cover loose or broken	✓	
Blocked gully waste, except where pipework is faulty		✓
Blocked toilet waste, except where pipework is faulty		✓
Blocked wastes up to your utility provider's boundary		✓

REPAIRS CATEGORY AND ITEM	Cottsway	You
Electrics and lighting		
Mains-powered smoke detector or battery back-up ones	✓	
Loose electric socket	✓	
Replacing light bulbs, starters and motors (except in communal areas)		✓
LED fittings in kitchens and bathrooms - if the LED bulb is an integral part of an enclosed light fitting Cottsway is responsible for its replacement. Please do not change LED bulbs in sealed units yourself.	✓	
Fuse box or consumer unit faults	✓	
Appliances within the home		✓
Fencing		
Generally, we only provide privacy panels for the first three metres from your home and chain-link fencing for the rest of your boundary, except for areas with public access such as car parks or public alleyways.	✓	

Repair responsibilities

REPAIRS CATEGORY AND ITEM	Cottsway	You
Floors, walls and ceilings		
Loose skirting boards	✓	
Loose floorboards	✓	
Loose wall tiles	✓	
Decorating, including after any repairs you or we carry out		✓
Small or hairline cracks in plaster on walls and/or ceilings		✓
Large repairs to plaster on walls and/or ceilings	✓	
Garages		
Replacing keys or locks, including if you cannot get into your garage because you have lost the keys		✓
Loose or faulty garage door	✓	
Roof leak	✓	

REPAIRS CATEGORY AND ITEM	Cottsway	You
Gutters and downpipes		
Loose plastic downpipe	✓	
Blocked gutter	✓	
Heating and hot water		
Storage heater not working	✓	
Gas fire not working	✓	
Radiator not heating up	✓	
Boiler faults	✓	
No hot water	✓	
Kitchen sink and units		
Broken or missing sink plugs		✓
Loose sink unit	✓	
Perished sink unit seals	✓	
Faulty door hinges on units	✓	
Loose drawer front	✓	
Loose or damaged worktop	✓	

Repair responsibilities

REPAIRS CATEGORY AND ITEM	Cottsway	You
Outside the property		
Gate not opening or closing properly	✓	
Loose or broken step	✓	
Broken concrete path	✓	
Garden maintenance		✓
Pest control		
Dealing with a pest infestation. Please contact us	✓	✓
Blocking any entry points or general repairs once the infestation has been cleared	✓	
Roofing		
Broken or loose chimney stack or pot	✓	
Loose or missing roof tiles loose	✓	
TV aerials and satellite dishes, except communal services		✓
Stairs		
Loose handrail	✓	
Loose stair or tread	✓	

REPAIRS CATEGORY AND ITEM	Cottsway	You
Toilets		
Faulty cistern, including the flush handle	✓	
Replacing toilet seats		✓
Locks, latches and fittings		
Broken door handle	✓	
Faulty door lock mechanism	✓	
Water systems		
Leaking pipe	✓	
Water tank leak or other fault	✓	
Window units and glazing		
Loose or dropped window	✓	
Faulty window handle	✓	
Glass broken by vandalism, but you must get a police crime reference number	✓	
Glass broken by accident		✓

Repair responsibilities

Repairs you must pay for

If you or someone in your home causes any damage, you must do the work yourself or arrange and pay to get it done. This includes circumstances where the police have had to use force to enter your home.

You may be able to claim for accidental damage through your home contents Insurance.

If damage is caused by a break-in or vandalism, we will carry out any work needed to make your home safe, but you must provide us with a police crime reference number.

We will charge you for the cost of the repair or callout if:

- We do a repair which we later find was your responsibility because you caused damage or neglected to look after your home properly – for example, if you threw wet wipes or a nappy down the toilet which we then had to unblock.
- You have exaggerated the urgency of the fault to get a faster response – for example, if you have heating but have told us you do not.
- We have to carry out repairs when you move out, on anything which is not fair wear and tear

We may also charge you if you are not at home, or do not allow us access, for a pre-arranged appointment.

Alterations and improvements

An alteration is anything which is an addition or change to your home or relates to gas, electrical or water supply.

Before you make any alterations, you must get permission from us because we need to make sure they will not damage your home or make it unsafe. In some cases, you will need our written permission.

If you are unsure if you need our permission or not to carry out an alteration, please contact us before starting any work. For more information, see: www.cottsway.co.uk/alterations

You might also need to get planning permission or building regulations approval from your local council.

Major structural changes or significant alterations to the layout of rooms are not usually permitted.

All electrical and gas work must be done by a qualified tradesperson who must supply a safety certificate.

We will not increase your rent because of any improvement works, but you will be responsible for repairs. It is important that you do not start any work until you have got all the necessary permissions. If you do not get permission from us, we may charge you to repair or restore your home to its original condition.

Working in your home

We need access to your home to carry out repairs, improvements and to complete essential inspections and safety checks.

When we come into your home to carry out these works, we need you to:

- Allow us access at the agreed time
- Make sure the areas we need to access are clean and clear of obstructions*
- Make sure there is an adult aged over 16 present
- Make sure any pets (especially dogs) are kept under control
- Treat all workers with respect.

* If you need help to clear access to the work area, please let us know beforehand.

When Cottsway operatives, surveyors or our contractors are working in your home we will:

- Carry photo ID and show it to you on request
- Give you notice if we need to disconnect services
- Use protective coverings to protect your belongings
- Meet all health and safety requirements
- Leave all work areas in a clean and safe condition
- Be respectful at all times.

When Cottsway operatives, surveyors or contractors are working in your home we won't:

- Smoke or vape on Cottsway property
- Use your bathroom without your permission
- Listen to the radio without your permission.



Service charges

Some of our homes, often those with a communal area or other shared spaces, will have a service charge.

Service charges cover things like cleaning, grounds and building maintenance, grass cutting, repairs, lifts and other running expenses.

We will tell you before you move in if you have a service charge linked to your home, and you will also find details on your rent statement and in your tenancy agreement.

Calculating the charge

Just before the start of the rent year, we calculate how much your service charge is likely to be. This is based on previous actual costs and can go up or down each year.

We will send you an estimated break down in March so you know what to expect.

In September, we will compare the actual costs of running the services against our estimate and send you a revised statement.

We will:

- Ensure our charges are clear and easy to understand
- Offer options on how to pay, including allpay, direct debit, through our website, or via debit or credit card over the phone
- Ask for feedback on any service charge changes
- Consult with customers if any major service changes are needed
- Consult with leaseholders if any major works are needed.



Your neighbourhood

When you work hard to maintain your home and any outside space, we understand it is important that the wider area reflects that commitment. Everyone should feel proud of the area they live in.

To do our bit to keep communities clean and tidy, we will:

- Inspect your estate on a regular basis and monitor shared services such as grounds maintenance and communal cleaning
- Remove fly tipping containing dangerous items within 24 hours and all other fly tipping within five working days
- Remove offensive graffiti within 24 hours of it being reported
- Work with dog owners to make sure these customers are keeping to their tenancy agreement
- Start the process to remove any abandoned vehicles within five working days of it being reported
- Support individuals or community groups to deal with community issues such as street cleaning to help improve the area where you live
- Tell you how often the communal areas will be cleaned and to what standard.

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