



Your Homes  
Newcastle



# Improvements and other planned works



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## Improvements and other planned work

We are committed to making sure that every tenant has a modern and safe home to live in. Our Modern Homes programme aims to bring all council homes in Newcastle up to and above the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

We also carry out other improvements, such as adaptations and planned maintenance work.

## Our Modern Homes investment programme

Our Modern Homes investment programme delivers packages to improve homes inside and outside, so they meet the Decent Homes Standard. These packages can include:

- new windows and doors;
- reroofing;
- electrical rewiring;
- ventilation upgrades;
- central-heating upgrades; and
- new kitchens and bathrooms.

The programme can also help improve security and the areas around homes.

## Consulting tenants on our investment programme

We have worked with tenants to decide how to organise the improvement work. The views we collected from the tenants' consultation event (7 February 2004) have resulted in:




- work being evenly spread across all areas of the city;
- work being done in two stages – an internal (inside) and external (outside) package – to allow tenants to stay in their homes during the work;
- a gap between the two stages of work; and
- if the tenants agree, internal and external packages being combined (mostly in multi-storeys) to reduce costs.

## When will my home be improved?

You can find out which work will be carried out to your home, and when it is due to start, by contacting any community housing team. If you need more information, you can also contact the investment delivery teams, whose contact details are as follows.

 **YHN House**  
Benton Park Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE7 7LX

Freephone numbers for the three teams:

-  0800 091 1255 (East area)
-  0800 091 1256 (Inner West area)
-  0800 091 1257 (Outer West and North area)

You can also search for your home in the 'When will my home be improved?' section of our website at [www.yhn.co.uk](http://www.yhn.co.uk).

Leaseholders should phone the Leasehold Team, based at YHN House, on Freephone 0800 091 0082.

## What information will I receive before work starts on my home?

When your home is due to be included in an improvement scheme, you will receive an information pack which will tell you what work will be carried out to your home.

This pack will tell you what will happen before any work begins, what to expect during the work, and what will happen when the work is finished.

Whenever possible, you will be able to choose from a range of fixtures and fittings for your home.

The pack will give you information about the standard of behaviour we expect from our contractors and what to do if you are not happy or if you have a problem.


## Will the improvement work damage my decoration?

For some improvement work, we cannot avoid damaging your decoration. The information pack you receive before the work starts will contain details of how the work will affect you. The pack will tell you whether your decoration is likely to be affected and whether you will receive an allowance to compensate for any damage.

## Planned maintenance work



We also carry out planned maintenance work and servicing to make sure that the buildings and equipment we are responsible for are kept in good working order. We have several contracts for regularly servicing buildings and equipment. These contracts cover:

- lifts;
  - closed-circuit television systems;
  - gas heating systems;
  - warden alarms; and
  - painting the outside of properties.
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If one of these contracts covers your home, you will receive information on when the work will be carried out, and how the work will affect you and your home.


## The adaptations service

The adaptations service can help tenants who are older or disabled to live independently at home by carrying out alterations to make their property easier to live in.

To find out if you qualify for an adaptation, you need to be assessed by Newcastle City Council Adult Services.

To arrange an assessment, phone the Adult Social Care Direct Team on 0191 278 8377, textphone 0191 278 8312 or email [scd@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:scd@newcastle.gov.uk).

The Equipment Direct Team from the Adult Social Care Direct Team may be able to provide you with some equipment or carry out simple alterations to your home.



However, if your situation is more complicated, a member of the Occupational Therapy Team will visit you to carry out a more detailed assessment and decide with you the best way to help you live independently.

### **What will happen if my home is suitable for an adaptation?**

If it is possible to adapt your property, the Occupational Therapy Team will tell us what type of alteration your home needs. We will then make arrangements for the work to be carried out.

We will consult you about the details of the plans once they have been drawn up, taking your views into account before we finalise what we will do. We will visit your home to do this. When you agree to the work, we will place an order for the work to be carried out.

When we are doing this work we will cause as little disruption as possible and monitor the standards of work. Once we have finished the work, we will ask you to fill in a customer satisfaction form or phone you to find out what you think about the work.

### **Can you provide adaptations as part of the Modern Homes programme?**

We can sometimes provide adaptations to kitchens and bathrooms when we carry out Modern Homes work on your home.

We contact all tenants before Modern Homes work is due to start. If you would benefit from an adaptation but have not applied for an assessment, we will contact Adult Services. If Adult Services tell us that your property needs an alteration, we will include it alongside the other improvement work.

## **What happens if my property cannot be adapted?**



We will try to meet your needs with the appropriate equipment or adaptations. If this is not possible, we may offer to rehouse you in a more suitable property. Our occupational therapist will be able to support you to find a home that is suitable for your needs.

## **Do your staff carry ID?**

**All our contractors and staff carry ID, which you should ask to see.**

You can also phone your local community housing team or Investment Delivery Team if you want to check who they are.

Gas, electricity and water company staff carry similar identification.

**If you are not sure who a caller is, do not let them in.**

## Health and safety of staff



We take the health of our staff very seriously and want to protect them as far as possible from the dangers of second-hand smoke. To help with this, we ask tenants not to smoke in the same room as any staff visiting your home. Please do not smoke in that room in the 30 minutes before an appointment time or during the visit.

## Can I carry out improvements and alterations to my home?



You have the right to carry out improvements to your home as long as you get our permission in writing before you start. You may also need to get building regulation approval or planning permission. You are responsible for finding this out. We will not refuse permission for you to carry out work unless we have a good reason to.

If you have permission to carry out work, you must follow any guidelines we, Newcastle City Council's planning department and building control section give you.

## What improvements do I need to get permission for?

Whatever work you plan to do to your home, it is best to ask us for permission first. However, the list below gives some examples of improvements that you need permission for.

- Decorating the outside of your home
- Putting in extra electrical sockets
- Installing central heating or moving radiators
- Building a shed or greenhouse
- Fitting a new bathroom suite or a shower
- Fitting new kitchen units or replacing existing ones
- Building a fireplace
- Building a garage, lean-to, driveway or hardstanding for a car
- Changing windows, front doors or back doors
- Building a conservatory
- Fitting laminate flooring
- Knocking down or building inside walls to change rooms
- Installing a stair lift or other adaptation
- Putting up a satellite dish or TV aerial
- Putting up wall tiles and Artex



This is not a complete list. Always get advice from your community housing team, from the planning department and from the building regulations section at Newcastle City Council **before** you start any work (see the 'Useful addresses' booklet for contact details).

If you carry out alterations without our permission, these could count as damage. In these cases, we may ask you to return the property back to its original condition or we may charge you for doing this. If you cause a lot of damage to the property, we may take legal action to evict you.

## How do I apply for permission to improve my home?

To apply for permission to carry out improvements, you should:

- contact your local community housing team and ask for an application form (our staff will be happy to help you fill in the form if you want);
- provide as much information as you can about the planned work, including any drawings;
- find out if you need building regulations approval or planning permission (if you do, contact the relevant council department and give your local community housing team a copy of the approval); and
- let us know when you have finished the work so that we can inspect it, if necessary. This is to check that the work has been done to an acceptable standard. If it has not, you will have to pay to bring it up to standard.

If necessary, we will maintain improvements we have approved. However, if something needs replacing and the cost is much more than the standard items we stock, we will ask you to pay the difference or accept the standard item.

## When I move out can I get compensation for improvements I have made to my home?

If you move out, we expect you to leave the improvements you have made, or to replace or put back the original fixtures and fittings. In some cases, you may be entitled to compensation for the improvements you have made to your home if you move to another property.

If you remove the improvements (for example, to take them with you), and you do not put the property back to the way it was before, we will charge you for the work we have to do to put this right.

The compensation for improvements scheme allows you to claim compensation for a wide range of improvements which you have carried out to your home. You can claim this compensation at the end of your tenancy.

Improvements can only be included in this scheme if they have been made with our permission and we have inspected and approved them. In the case of electrical and gas installations, we will need to see appropriate safety certificates.

The amount of compensation we give you will depend on the type of improvement and the length of time since the work was carried out.

You can get more information about this scheme, including the conditions, application forms, and details of the information we need to decide your claim, from:

### Administration section

YHN House  
Benton Park Road  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE7 7LX.

 Phone: 0191 278 8860

The details are also on our website at [www.yhn.co.uk](http://www.yhn.co.uk).

Information leaflets are also available at any of our offices (see the 'Useful addresses' booklet for contact details).

## How do I give you a compliment, complaint or comment?

We are committed to providing an excellent service to our customers. We would like you to tell us any compliments, complaints and comments you have about our services. Your feedback helps us to find ways to improve services.

For information about how you can give us a compliment, comment or complaint, please see the 'What to do if I have a complaint' section in the 'Welcome to your new home' booklet.





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