

Stevenage Council Housing Standard



What is the Stevenage Council Housing Standard?



We need to consult with tenants and key stakeholders to help write our Stevenage Council Housing Standard (Stevenage Standard). We hope this document is informative enough to know what to expect when we look after and improve your home. We want you to be happy, safe and secure in the place you live.

We know the quality of your home has a huge impact on your quality of life.

When we take care of your home, our aim is to meet and exceed national housing standards. Our Stevenage Standard outlines what you can expect when we improve your home and replace key items such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Throughout the document you will see two icons.



The Stevenage Borough Council icon shows you where we are offering services to you in addition to the national standard.



Our life-cycle icon shows how long you can expect this area of your home to last before a replacement is considered necessary.



Understanding your home

To ensure we meet our Stevenage Standard, we need to understand the condition of your home.

We hold a lot of historical information about repairs carried out at your property and this helps us to make sure that components such as bathrooms and kitchens are replaced when they get to the end of their life cycle.



Surveying your home

Typically, we examine the general structure inside and out, the roof, drainpipes, windows, doors, kitchens, bathrooms, heating, electrics, flooring, fencing and paths. This helps us to know what needs to be replaced and when.

We carry out routine surveys and if you would like to know when your home is due to be surveyed, or when a specific improvement will be undertaken, please contact us at: Asset.Management@stevenage.gov.uk.



Energy Efficiency

We will also assess how energy-efficient your home is and advise you how you can save money by reducing your gas and electricity bills.

If you think your home needs a survey because of its age or condition, please contact us. See back page for contact details.

Meeting the National Housing Standards

There are a number of national housing standards we must comply with to make sure that your home is in a safe, sound and secure condition.

Our Stevenage Standard aims to meet these standards and exceed them where possible.

The following provides an overview of the national standards.

The Decent Homes Standard

In 2000, the UK Government set a target to make all social housing met minimum standards by 2010 and that the properties were maintained in the future.

The Government defined a Decent Home as:

- Meeting the minimum safety standards for housing
- Being in a reasonable state of repair
- Having reasonably modern facilities and services
- Sufficient thermal comfort

We also meet a number of other Government standards, covering things such as gas and fire safety, your health and safety and asbestos.

You can find more information about the Decent Homes Standard at www.gov.uk and view the additional standards at www.legislation.gov.uk

Stevenage Standard

We aim to meet seven key areas detailed within the Stevenage Standard:

- Modern Homes
- Living Independently
- Warmth and Efficiency
- Safety and Security
- Your Responsibilities
- The Councils Responsibilities
- What you can expect from contractors

We have detailed how we intend to meet these key areas in each section.

Your Kitchen

We appreciate how much you value the kitchen as the heart of your home and aim for all our homes to have reasonable modern facilities and finishes in good working order.

Under the Decent Homes Standard, the Government defines a modern kitchen as less than 30 years old. However, we will replace your kitchen every 20 years.

As standard

Wherever possible, we will make sure that your new kitchen has:

- 8 kitchen units (or no less than your current number)
- Separate electrical connection sockets for all appliances
- A new sink and water-efficient taps
- 450mm of ceramic tiling above your worktops with a range of colours available (three rows of tiling above worktops)
- New flooring and decoration
- A modern light fitting
- A new accessible device to isolate your water supply

When replacing the kitchen in your home we will:

- * Employ kitchen designers to consult you about the design, style and colour scheme and incorporate your ideas where we can.
- * Offer you a choice of modern colours for kitchen units, worktops, wall tiles and flooring.
- * A new extractor fan.
- * Where necessary, help you to clear out your existing units ready for the new kitchen installation.
- * Reasonably adjust the design of your kitchen to accommodate your health needs, where you've told us about them.

Your Bathroom

When we upgrade your bathroom, we will provide you with a modern, durable and functional replacement.

Under the Decent Homes Standard, the Government defines a modern bathroom as less than 40 years old. However, Stevenage will replace your bathroom every 30 years.

As standard

We will make sure that your new bathroom has:

- A water-efficient white ceramic pedestal wash basin, toilet and a pressed steel bath
- Water efficient taps
- White tiling installed in splash areas and above the basin, with a range of coloured border tiles
- New non-slip flooring and decoration
- A low-energy humidity-controlled constant extractor fan
- A modern enclosed light fitting

When replacing your bathroom, we will:

- * Offer you a choice of colours for flooring, decoration, and a matching bath panel and toilet seat.
- * Where there is a risk of scalding, we will install thermostatically controlled taps and showers to prevent scalding.
- * A new extractor fan.
- * Reasonably adjust the design of your bathroom to accommodate your health needs, where you've told us about them.
- * Offer all sheltered scheme customers a level-access shower.



External Decoration

We will look after the outside of your home by painting it every 6 years.

We will also paint and maintain communal areas that you share with other residents.

As standard

We will maintain the outside of your home by painting:

- Woodwork that has been painted before, including timber windows and doors, and any wooden areas around your roof.
- Previously painted walls, including rendering and cladding.
- All new materials we have installed, including woodwork and rendering
- Fencing and gates.

When maintaining the outside of your home we will:

- * Provide a choice of paint colours to you, although this may be limited if you live in a listed building or conservation area.
- * Inspect roofs and make sure that they are wind and weatherproof.
- * Make sure that chimneys are free from vegetation, have no loose or missing pots and the brickwork is in good condition.
- * We will clean roofs that have a severe growth of weeds and other vegetation on them.
- * We will make sure that gutters and rainwater pipes are safe, secure and that water can flow through them easily.

Your Roof

We will ensure that your roof is watertight and repaired when necessary. We will replace your roof when it has reached the end of its life cycle or it is no longer value for money to keep repairing it.



As standard

When we renew your roof, we will:

- Replace pitched and flat roofs including flashings with materials of a similar type.
- Replace gutters, fascia, soffits and verges with an equivalent, usually made from PVCu. Different materials may be used on listed buildings or homes within conservation areas.
- Inspect your roof structure before we start work and if needed treat any infestations or rot in the timbers.
- Make sure your T.V aerial, satellite dish, alarm, and telephone services etc. continue to work while we undertake roof work and ensure they are re-fixed once work is complete.



Living Independently

We want you to be able to live independently and recognise that undertaking some small changes or adapting your home can help you to live there happily for longer.

We understand you may need support and if you are experiencing difficulties, our Specialist Support Team may be able to help you. We will visit you at home to discuss your needs and then agree how best we can support you.

As standard

We can provide:

- Small adaptations, such as handrails
- Major adaptations to help you move around more easily (please note this is subject to additional funding requirements).
- Undertake an accommodation and complex needs assessments to identify any support needs you may have.
- Help to connect you with specialist agencies and services that may be able to support you.

When providing adaptations, we will:

- Work in partnership with occupational therapists make sure your needs are fully assessed before work begins.
- Employ specialist, experienced contractors and make sure you are confident using any equipment we install.
- Provide other equipment or aids to help you manage better at home.
- Consider your future needs when carrying out planned improvements and when building new homes (such as installing level access showers into Independent Living schemes).



Energy Efficiency as standard

When we survey your home, we will look at how energy efficient it is and make improvements wherever we can, including:

- Replacing boilers
- Sealing areas where draughts are coming in
- Install the most energy efficient windows for your property
- Loft and cavity insulation

We have set an aspiration in our Climate Change Strategy (2016-21) for Stevenage to achieve zero carbon status by 2050.

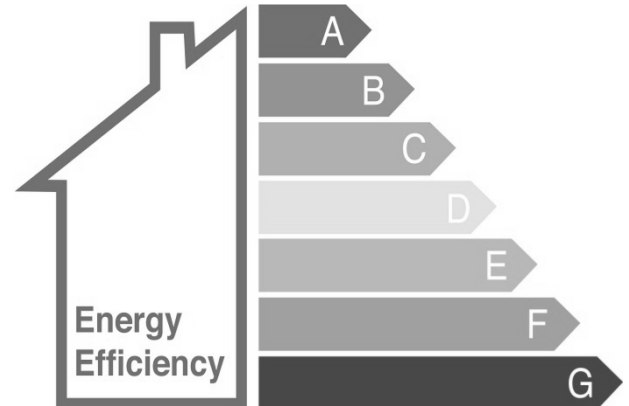
On the 12th June 2019 Stevenage Borough Council declared a climate emergency. From this we pledged to have all our homes at EPC band C by 2030.

All our homes with new tenants since 2008 have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). This provides details of the energy efficiency of your home.

You can check if your property has had an EPC by visiting the government website www.epcregister.com which holds all information on completed EPC's

We have produced some helpful information so you can find ways of reducing your energy costs. Please visit the links below to access this information:

- <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/benefits/help-to-manage-the-cost-of-living>
- <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/find-schemes-grants-and-benefits-help-home-energy>



Your Heating & Hot Water

We know how expensive the cost of household energy has become and we want all our homes to have energy-efficient gas central heating, where it can be installed.

When required, we will replace boilers with an A-rated energy efficient condensing boiler.

We will replace boilers every 15 years and replace your radiators every 30 years.

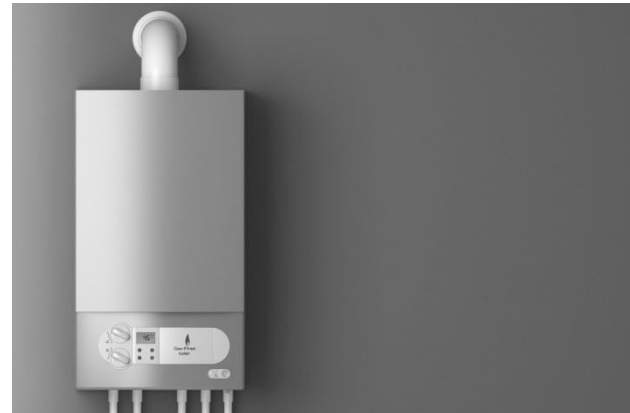
As standard

When installing your new heating system, we will:

- Install a modern, energy-efficient boiler to help you save money.
- Inspect radiators and controls to see if they need to be renewed because of age, condition or efficiency.
- Provide you with greater control over heating your home more efficiently with a range of controls, including room thermostats, thermostatic radiator valves and a boiler programmer.

When replacing your heating system, we will:

- * Talk to you to see how we can best replace your heating with as little inconvenience and disturbance to your flooring and finishes as possible.
- * Show you how to efficiently use the system and programs, and give you the manufacturer's operating manual.



Loft & Cavity Insulation



As standard

- Install up to 300mm of loft insulation in your roof space, where it is possible to do so. Usually, you will need to remove all your belongings from the loft to enable us to do the work.
- If your home is constructed with cavity walls, we will install cavity wall insulation. The surveyor will advise you during the inspection.



When installing loft insulation, we will:

- Clear roof spaces to allow us to carry out the work if you are in need of support.





Windows & Doors

Modern windows and doors not only improve the appearance of your home but provide better warmth and security.

We will consider replacing your windows and doors based on their condition and age of 30 years.

As standard

When replacing your windows and doors:

- All new doors and windows will comply with Secured by Design standards and fire regulations.
- Ensure new windows are internally glazed to provide greater security and improve maintenance.
- We will make sure all new window handles are lockable and, where possible, positioned so they are easy for you to use.
- All windows and doors are A rated in terms of energy efficiency performance.

We will install low-maintenance front doors and frames with a number, letter box, spy hole, double glazed vision panel (where selected), draught proofing, low-level threshold and door knocker.

We will replace patio doors but will not install them where they have not already been in place.

All windows will be designed to improve the ability to clean them from the inside.



When replacing your windows and doors:

You will have a choice of door styles and colours, although this may be limited if you live in a listed building or conservation area.

Where possible, we will install fire escape windows to the upstairs of your home.

All windows upstairs, and elsewhere, when necessary, will have safety restrictors, allowing them to be opened to a maximum of 100mm unless overridden by an adult.

Your Health & Safety

We may inspect your home to make sure it meets health and safety requirements. This may include checks for asbestos, fire safety or other requirements to meet legalisation.

We will notify you in advance of any inspection.

Please alert us immediately to any issues that you believe could be damaging to your health.



Inspections & Servicing

As standard

We will inspect and maintain the following equipment to meet legal requirements, if we have fitted them to your home:

- * Gas
- * Fire alarms/emergency lights
- * Lightning conductors
- * Door entry systems
- * Solar panels and other renewable technologies
- * Passenger lifts and lifting equipment, such as hoists or stairlifts.
- * Electrics
- * Water systems that need to be checked for
- * Legionella
- * Sprinklers
- * Communal TV systems

Other specialist equipment installed by Stevenage Borough Council

Not all our homes contain this equipment and the list is not exhaustive. Please contact us if you are unsure about the maintenance/repair of equipment in your home.

Electrics in your Home



Electrics in your home are required to be updated every 30 years, this includes works such as rewiring or replacing the consumer unit in your home.

As standard

When replacing or upgrading your electrics:

- We will install efficient humidistat-controlled trickle extractor fans, in kitchens and bathrooms where possible.
- A minimum of 12 double plug sockets will be installed or upgraded.
- A 10-way consumer unit will be fitted to replace any existing units.
- A mains powered smoke and heat detector.
- A mains powered carbon monoxide detector.
- Upgrade enclosed light fittings with LED bulbs where required.
- Rewire your home fully or partially depending on the age of your electrics.



Gas Safety

As standard

We will:

- Carry out a gas safety check on all your gas appliances every year to make sure they are safe. This is our legal obligation.
- Notify you when your gas service is due. You must contact us as soon as you receive this.
- Provide you with your gas safety certificate once the checks have been carried out.
- We will install a carbon monoxide detector at your annual gas safety inspection if you don't already have one.
- Inspect the condition of carbon monoxide detectors, if you already have one fitted.

Smoke Detectors

As standard

- * If you live in a flat, we will test your smoke detectors and service the communal fire alarm where one is fitted by us. It is important you give us access to your home for these vital checks
- * Where there is not one present in your home we will install a battery powered smoke alarm at your annual gas safety check. We will install a mains powered smoke and heat detector as part of the next electrical safety check over the next five years

All our gas engineers are Gas Safe-certified and we also hold the Gas Safe Certificate.



Electrical Safety

All electrical installations deteriorate with age and use. They should therefore be inspected and tested at regular intervals to check whether they are in a satisfactory condition for continued use. Such safety checks are commonly referred to as 'periodic inspection and testing'.

As standard

- We will inspect the electrics in your home every five years to make sure they comply with current regulations. As part of our inspection, we will test the circuits, check all electrical sockets and switches, and provide you a certificate which details future electrical work that we may need to carry out.
- We will install a smoke detector, heat detector in the kitchen and carbon monoxide detector (where you home has a gas supply) at the time of the visit where there are none present.



Electrical Safety
Register

incorporating



Dealing with Asbestos

Based on the age and characteristics of your home, we may carry out a survey to find out whether there is asbestos present.

Although it is now illegal to use asbestos products, it was used extensively in building and construction in the past. Much of the asbestos is still in place but as long as it is in good condition and is not going to be disturbed, there is no risk to you or your family.

However, if it is disturbed or damaged, it can become a danger to health. We have a robust asbestos policy and procedures which comply with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and asbestos regulations.

As standard

Before we make any major improvements to your home we will assess the risk of asbestos being present and may also need to undertake a survey before work starts.

If a survey is needed, we will let you know in advance and give you feedback once it is complete.

After the survey we will decide what we need to do to manage the risk in your home. This may include:

- * Just monitoring the situation as there is no risk to you
- * Making some minor alteration to your home to reduce the risk
- * Removing the asbestos completely

We will contact you before we take any action.

We maintain an asbestos register for all our homes which we regularly update and use to minimise risk.

If you have any concerns regarding asbestos in your home, please contact us.

All our contractors will have received asbestos awareness training and, where required, we will only use licensed asbestos removal contractors in accordance with Health & Safety legislation.

Preventing Legionella

Legionellosis is the collective term for diseases caused by the legionella bacteria, including the most serious: Legionnaires' Disease.

We take the risk of legionella very seriously and have a number of measures in place to make sure the homes we manage are free from the bacteria.

As standard

- We have identified homes that have water systems that place them at greater risk of legionella than others. This is usually where water is stored but we service and monitor them to ensure that the bacteria does not become a problem.
- We comply with Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines by identifying risks, assessing what needs to be done, and making improvements based on our assessments.



Reducing the Risk of Fire

We take fire safety very seriously as it can cause death, injury and damage to your home and possessions.

As standard

We are committed to reducing the risk of fire in your home by:

- Undertaking regular Fire Risk Assessments to all of our blocks of flats, making sure assessments are in line with the Fire Safety Act 2023.
- Carrying out regular communal area inspections to remove any items that could be a fire hazard or block an escape route.
- Ensuring suitable fire detection and suppression systems including sprinklers are in our High-Rise blocks and alarm systems are fitted in the communal area of your block (for those living in flats) and inside your home.
- Making sure escape routes are free from trip hazards, are adequately lit, are signposted and lead everyone to a place of safety.
- Carrying out checks to gas, electrical and fire safety systems within your home.

Fences & Walls

As standard

* (this area needs to be agreed in line with the new proposed Repairs Policy).

Your Responsibilities for Repairs & Maintenance

Our Stevenage Standard outlines our responsibilities for maintaining your home but you are also responsible for keeping your property to the standard described in your Tenancy Agreement.

Minor repairs & maintenance

You are responsible for the repair and maintenance of some smaller elements of your home. These are listed in your Tenancy Agreement and include toilet seats, tap washers and chains, and plugs for sinks, baths and basins.

Take a look at your Tenancy Agreement for all the minor repairs you are responsible for:
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/your-tenancy/tenancy-agreement>

Reporting repairs

You must help us to look after your home by telling us when a repair is needed as soon as it becomes a problem and letting us in to carry out the work.

How to report a repair

To report a routine repair please call our Customer Service Centre on 01438 242666

To report an emergency repair during normal working hours (8am to 5pm), contact our Customer Service Centre on 01438 211011.

For emergency repairs outside of normal working hours, that pose an immediate risk or danger to the tenant or property, please call 01438 314963.

There are several ways to report a repair:

- * Visit: www.stevenage.gov.uk
- * Call: 01438 242666
- * Call into our local office (Daneshill House) (8am– 6pm, Monday to Friday)

Our repairs are categorised as follows:

Emergency	between 8am - 6pm, 7 days a week we aim to be there within 24 hours
Urgent	8am – 6pm we aim to be there within 7 days
Routine	8am - 6pm allow up to 20 working days

Chargeable repairs

We will charge you for any repairs that are not our responsibility (e.g. changing the locks because of lost keys) or which have been caused by wilful or accidental damage.

FAILED APPOINTMENTS COST MONEY

It is important that you keep to appointments you have made or tell us in advance if you need to cancel.

Completing your own alterations

If you want to make any alterations or additions to your home, you must write to us asking for our permission (Landlords consent) first. This includes installing a shower, tiled floors, replacing internal doors and light fittings etc.

This list is not exhaustive, and it is best to check with us to see if you need to write for our permission before making any changes.

We will look at your proposals and write to you giving you permission to go ahead or not.

Any work we approve must be carried out by a competent person with the right certification to do the job. Stevenage Borough Council retains the right to instruct you to reinstate or remove any alteration you have undertaken without our formal approval.

More information and to apply to make alterations to your home can be found here:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/home-alterations>

Stevenage Borough Council's Contractor Pledge



The Contractor Code of Conduct sets out the level of service that we expect our contractors to deliver to you:

We will keep you informed, telling you what's happening and when.

We tailor our services to individual customer needs.

We treat you and your home with respect and obtain permission before using your facilities.

We wear appropriate uniforms and display identification at all times.

We are thoroughly trained and are aware of our duty to health and safety.