



Alterations and Improvements Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 One of our key corporate objectives is to maintain safe, secure and affordable for our customers. This policy supports this and meets the needs of our customers’ needs.
- 1.2 This Alterations and Improvements Policy sets out our responsibilities and commitments to customers, as well as our customers’ responsibilities in altering and improving their home.
- 1.3 This policy supports IVH’s wider commitment to inclusive services, tenancy sustainment and long-term management of homes.

2. Policy

- 2.1 At IVH, we recognise the properties we own are customers’ homes and they will want to make it their own. Some customers may want to make cosmetic alterations or improvements to their homes and this policy, ensures a considered and consistent approach when customers request permission to do this.
- 2.2 A full list of types of alterations and improvements covered by this policy is identified in the procedure (see appendix 1), although in general, we would consider an alteration or improvement to be any works above and beyond decoration.
- 2.3 Customers must get consent before any alterations or improvements are made and we will not unreasonably withhold this. All alterations or improvements are made at the customers’ own expense, using suitably qualified/accredited contractors where they are needed. The customer will be responsible for all costs involved inclusive of ongoing service, repairs and maintenance.
- 2.4 Where alterations or improvements are found to have been made without any approval either whilst in a live tenancy or when leaving a property, IVH will recharge the customer the cost for putting the property back to the Repair standard. Enforcement action will be proportionate to the risk identified and will take account of customer circumstances and any steps taken to rectify issues
- 2.5 Customers must get consent from IVH before starting work. We respond to any requests to make improvements - giving reasons if rejecting the request and if agreeing, any reasonable conditions being imposed.
- 2.6 When considering requests for alterations or improvements, IVH take a proportionate and person-centered approach. We will consider the impact for the customer and their individual needs including disability, health needs, safety, or tenancy sustainment. We will also consider the impact on the long-term condition and safety of the home. We will also consider where the alterations or improvements could create other hazards within

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the home.

- 2.7 If an alteration or improvement has been approved and subsequently made to a property, the customer may be entitled to claim compensation if they end their tenancy. Details on the calculation of any compensation payments is noted in the procedure.
- 2.8 The Housing Officer, Building Surveyor or Property Inspector (dependant on the nature of the request) will write to the customer with the outcome of their application within 28 days of the application being received with all the relevant legislation and regulation information required to support the application. The decision will contain the reasons for any refusal, and conditions if permission is granted.

If the customer does not agree with the decision or conditions, they may appeal in writing giving their reasons. This will be reviewed by a Housing Manager or Area Repairs Manager (as appropriate). The outcome of this will be responded to within 20 working days in writing and recorded on the Housing Management system. All documentation should be saved against the customers tenancy file to enable future reference to be made.

No further internal review will be undertaken as part of the alterations and improvements approval process. Customers who remain dissatisfied may raise their concerns through IVH's Complaints Policy.

3. Responsibility

3.1 The Heads of Repairs and Estates Maintenance, Head of Assets Management, Head of Independent and Community Living and Head of Customers and Communities are responsible for the maintaining and monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and any updating required of this policy.

3.2 The Area Repairs Managers, Investment Delivery manager, Independent Living team and Neighbourhood team are responsible for the effective implementation and adherence to this policy.

3.3 All colleagues have a duty to make sure they understand their role in the effective application of this policy

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4. Performance Indicators/ targets/ standards

4.1 The Head of Repairs & Estates Maintenance, the Head of Asset Management, the Head of Independent and Community Living and the Head of Customers and Communities will monitor the operation of this policy to ensure decisions are made fairly, proportionately and consistently. This will include oversight of customer feedback, response timeliness, reasons for refusal, and learning from complaints or appeals. This will be reported to Homes Steering Group.

5.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years – unless legislation, business or sector developments require otherwise – to ensure that it continues to meet the stated objectives and take account of good practice developments.

6. Current Legislation

6.1 This policy follows the requirements of the following pieces of legislation and regulation:

- Housing Act 1985 (including Section 97 – tenant consent requirements)
- Right to Repair Regulations 1994
- Secure Tenants of Local Authorities (Compensation for Improvements) Regulations 1994
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Building Regulations (including Part P – electrical safety)
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (where relevant)
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Building Regulations

7. Equality and Diversity Implications

7.1 Irwell Valley Homes is committed to treating people with honesty, dignity, respect, and trust. This applies to colleagues, customers potential customers, contractors, and Board Members. At IVH:

- **Equality** is about ensuring that every individual has an opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.
- **Diversity** is recognising difference and responding positively to those differences.
- **Inclusion** is about creating an environment where our services and employment opportunities are accessible to all.

7.2 IVH will be mindful of the Equality Act 2010 in all its actions and will consider all the protected characteristics of the Act which are: Race, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief, Age, Marriage/Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity explicitly. Further to the protected characteristics, IVH will be mindful of socio-economic disadvantage and will do everything in its power to minimise this and other forms of disadvantage.

7.3 When applying this policy, we will use data we hold about the diverse needs of customers

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to make appropriate service adjustments. We will ask customers how the repair is impacting their safety and security to assess if the repair is having a disproportionate effect due to protected characteristic(s) e.g. physical disabilities or mental ill health, pregnancy, age, experiencing domestic abuse or hate crime, and needs to be completed quickly.

- 7.4 We will ensure customers have a wide range of choices in terms of accessing the service, the format and media used to communicate information about the service.
- 7.5 When considering requests for alterations or improvements, IVH will take a person-centered and proportionate approach, particularly where requests relate to disability, health needs or tenancy sustainment. Where applicable we may review the requests under the Aids and Adaptation policy.
- 7.6 Our commitment to equality and inclusion underpins how decisions are made under this policy, including the consideration of reasonable adjustments and the avoidance of disproportionate impact on any customer or household.

8. Cross Reference Documents

- IVH Alterations and improvement procedure
- IVH Repairs Policy
- IVH Void Lettable Standard
- IVH Compensation Policy
- IVH Asset Management Strategy
- IVH Aids and Adaptation Policy
- IVH Complaints Policy
- Inclusive Services Policy

Appendix 1 – Alterations and Improvement Procedure

Alteration and Improvement Procedure – May 2025

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Introduction

One of our key corporate objectives is to keep homes safe, secure and affordable for our customers. To meet this objective, Irwell Valley Homes (IVH) aims to provide an accessible, reliable, and efficient alterations and improvements process that meets our customers' needs.

This Alterations and Improvements Procedure set out our obligations and commitments to customers, as well as our customers obligations in altering and improving their home.

Aims and Objectives

This procedure defines the roles and responsibilities of IVH colleagues in relation to the alteration and improvement policy. It outlines the procedure, review stages and responsibilities for both IVH and our customers.

Responsibility

The Homes Team, Asset Team and Neighbourhoods Team are responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

Procedure/Process

1.0 Rights and Responsibilities

The Housing Act 1985 (Part IV) gives the customer the right to carry out alterations to their home subject to certain conditions.

All work involving alterations to the property shall be at the customer's own expense. The customer must;

- Obtain any statutory consent prior to the commencement of any works.
- Obtain written permission from IVH before carrying out any alterations, adaptations, improvements or changes to the structure and/or the heating system, electrical system or any external decorations of the property.
- Obtain written permission before carrying out any textured finishes or other unusual decorative work that could be classed as cosmetic or that may affect future tenancies.
- Pay any reasonable costs incurred by IVH when rectifying any unsatisfactory or unauthorised alterations.
- Leaseholders may be charged reasonable costs to cover the administration of an application.
- Leaseholders must commission any approved works themselves. Dependent on the works carried out, IVH reserve the right to post-inspect the work upon completion.

1.0 Types of Alterations and Improvements

The following types of alterations and improvements are envisaged as being covered under this procedure. This list is intended to be indicative and is not exhaustive.

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Minor (Cosmetic - Reviewed by a Housing Officer):

- Erecting a shed.
- Laying of laminated flooring. (See tenancy agreements, not permitted in flats).
- External painting.

Major

(Reviewed by a Property Inspector):

- Installing decking, fencing or a gate
- Driveways
- Electrical alterations
- Plumbing and Heating alterations
- Replacing internal doors

(Reviewed by a Building Surveyor);

- Removal of internal walls or any works to rearrange internal layout.
- Replacement kitchen or bathroom
- Replacement of externally facing doors and windows

1.0 Procedure

Receipt of Request

Requests will be received by the Customer Service Team (CST), or alternatively directly to the Housing Officer. The relevant CST/CC colleague will then ensure it is processed in accordance with the procedure through IVH housing management system.

The Housing Officer, Building Surveyor or Property Inspector (dependant on the nature of the request) will write to the customer with the outcome of their application within 28 days of the application being received with all the relevant legislation and regulation information required to support the application. The decision will contain the reasons for any refusal, and conditions if permission is granted.

If the customer does not agree with the decision or conditions, they may appeal in writing giving their reasons. This will be reviewed by a Housing Manager or Area Repairs Manager (as appropriate). The outcome of this will be responded to within 20 working days in writing and recorded on the Housing Management system. All documentation should be saved against the customers tenancy file to enable future reference to be made.

No further internal review will be undertaken as part of the alterations and improvements approval process. Customers who remain dissatisfied may raise their concerns through IVH's Complaints Policy.

Review Process

All requests will be considered on a proportionate, case-by-case basis, considering customer circumstances, property safety, long-term asset management and the impact on neighbouring residents. Once the approval request has been received via the 'approval request form', the request will be reviewed by the Housing Officer, Building Surveyor or Property Inspector (dependant on the nature of the request) and can be declined immediately for the following reasons:

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- *If the alteration is likely to reduce the value of the property.*
- *If the alteration is likely to make the property less desirable for letting in the future.*
- *If the alteration is likely to have a negative effect on the neighbours or community.*
- *If the alteration affects the extent of the accommodation provided by the property, such as loft or cellar conversions.*
- *If alteration work is prohibited by the lease.*

Where more technical works are involved, the request will be passed to a Property Inspector or Building Surveyor for review.

Where the below work is requested by a tenant, this type of request will normally be refused due to safety, security and fire risk considerations. Where a customer identifies a specific vulnerability or safeguarding concern, alternative solutions or reasonable adjustments will be discussed unless there are exceptional circumstances where approval is required to meet assessed needs, statutory duties, or safety requirements. Any such cases must be supported by appropriate evidence and referred for technical review (leaseholders' applications would be considered on an individual basis):

- *Structural alterations such as removing dividing walls, partitions to bedrooms, loft conversions, conservatories, porches and fitting patio doors.*
- *Conversion of cellars as this is not a habitable space*
- *Works that may lead to the safety of occupiers in the property, or any properties in the locality, to be deemed to be at risk.*
- *Ponds in the garden*
- *External electrics*
- *Hard wired CCTV*
- *Installation of gas fires and log or multi-fuel burners.*
- *Expenses are likely to be incurred by IVH or any future resident, either at present or in the future, including service and maintenance*
- *Cat flaps to external doors will be refused, as they are a fire safety and security hazard.*

All requests received will be reviewed to consider individual circumstances and options to explore alternative solutions where appropriate.

If the application is to be refused, the Housing Officer (for cosmetic or let ability changes) or the Property Inspector or Building Surveyor (for structural/technical changes) will inform the applicant in writing of the reasons; this will conclude the application. This decision must also be recorded in the Housing Management System and corresponding documents saved against the customers tenancy file for future reference.

The Housing Officer can only approve changes, that would not affect the future let ability of the property or that do not involve physical interference with the structure. For all other alteration requests, technical assistance will be provided by the Property Inspectors and Building Surveyors.

Technical Assessment

Gas & Electrical Works

For any requests to make alterations to gas appliances, these should be passed to the Gas & Electrical Manager for advice and guidance. The manager will advise as to whether permission can be granted or not and as to whether an inspection is required before approval is given.

Structural Works

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Most structural alterations should be normally refused unless there are exceptional circumstances (for example, supported adaptations or safety requirements). Any that do require assessing, for example due to minor/major adaptations set out in a OH Report, will be assessed and verified by a Building Surveyor. Discretionary alterations and adaptations requested will be assessed based on customers' needs.

Fire Safety Related Works

Anything that may have an impact of the safety of the building, any neighbouring buildings or the occupants will be reviewed by the Fire Safety Manager. It is the responsibility of the Property Inspector, Building Surveyor and/or the Housing Officer to raise the query with the Fire Safety Manager.

4.0 Standard Conditions

Customers must be made aware via the "Residents Agreement Form" which sets out the Permissions, terms of acceptance and standard conditions that IVH applies to alterations work, as set out below;

- The standard of workmanship must be acceptable to the IVH employee overseeing the request.
- If appropriate, all neighbours have been consulted and do not object to the work.

Examples when neighbours should be consulted include:

- *Where access to the neighbours' property will be affected.*
- *Where the neighbour's view will be obstructed.*
- *Where natural light will be obscured.*
- *Where the work would have a negative impact on the character of the property. Where the alteration may create a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours.*

Where the work may have a negative impact on the value of the neighbours' property.

Evidence that the neighbours have been consulted and do not object must be provided to the Housing Officer, Building Surveyor or Property Inspector prior to approval being given.

- IVH will cover costs for any initial asbestos surveys if required, before works are permitted to commence. IVH reserve the right to charge customers, for any asbestos removal works required, before works are permitted to commence.
- The customer will be responsible for all costs involved inclusive of ongoing service, repairs and maintenance.
- In the event of an emergency repair, IVH will attend and make safe. However, any further works required to the associated alteration or improvement will be the customers responsibility.
- All appropriate safety regulations and legislation must be adhered to.
- The work must be carried out by a qualified tradesperson who is appropriately insured and evidence of this must be provided during the application process for IVH decision making.

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- The customer will be responsible for any ongoing maintenance costs associated with the works carried out. Irwell Valley will take the decision when the property becomes vacant, as to whether to leave in situ and take ownership or remove.
- If appropriate, Planning Permission and/or a Building Control approval must be obtained before work starts. Confirmation and evidence that Planning Consent or a Building Warrant has been granted must be provided to the Property Inspector or Building Surveyor in advance of the work commencing.
- All installation of gas appliances, or any work to gas pipes must be carried out by a Gas Safe registered Contractor. Upon completion, relevant gas certification must be completed and provided to the Gas Manager for review.
- Any electrical alterations should be undertaken by a competent and suitably qualified person or contractor. Upon completion, a minor electrical installation certificate must be completed and provided to the Electrical Supervisors for reviewing and uploading to our compliance management system. It is the responsibility of the Building Surveyor, Property Inspector or the CC to ensure this documentation is provided to the Compliance team.
- IVH will retain ownership of any fixtures or fittings, and they must not be removed without the Irwell Valley's permission.
- The work must be completed within 6 months of the original approval date. If work is not completed within 6 months, a new application will be required.

IVH reserves the right to restore the property to its original condition if the improvements or alterations are not finished to an acceptable standard, or if any of the other criteria have not been met. The customer will be responsible for paying any costs associated with this work

1.0 Unsatisfactory Work

Where work is unsatisfactory, the Property Inspector or Building Surveyor should decide whether the alterations are dangerous. Where work undertaken are considered dangerous or may lead to further deterioration of the property, it may be necessary to carry out emergency repairs:

The customer will be notified, any such repairs should then be ordered in the normal manner, and the customer should be recharged accordingly. Enforcement action will be proportionate to the risk identified and will take account of customer circumstances and any steps taken to rectify issues

The leaseholder will be notified; any such repairs should be rectified in accordance with the lease.

Where alterations are unsatisfactory but do not require urgent attention, the customer should be advised to complete the necessary work within a specific time period. Failure to do so may constitute a breach of the tenancy/lease agreement and legal action may be sought.

Only once the work is to a satisfactory standard and has been post-inspected, should the work be signed off.

2.0 Alterations Carried Out Without Permission

If information is received or it is noted that a customer has carried out alterations to their home

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without prior permission, a visit should be made to the property by the Housing Officer. It may also be necessary to invite a Property Inspector to this meeting if the alteration is structural or affects the fabric of the property.

Where the work undertaken is satisfactory and permission would have been given under the formal procedure, retrospective permission will be considered, together with a warning about future action. This will be saved on the customer tenancy along with all relevant notes on the housing management system. Leaseholders may incur an admin fee for the inspection and retrospective approval (lease dependant).

If the work undertaken is not considered satisfactory by IVH colleagues, as per our Repairs Standards, the customer should be advised that the property must be reinstated to the original condition or brought to a satisfactory standard at the customers own costs. Failure to do so will mean that IVH may take action for breach of tenancy/lease, if applicable.

Where work undertaken is considered dangerous or may lead to further deterioration of the property, it may be necessary to carry out emergency repairs. Any such repairs should then be ordered in the normal manner and in accordance with the lease if a leased property, and the customer will be recharged.

A written explanation will be provided to the customer as soon as reasonably practical following the identification of any issues. This will be sent by the Property Inspector or Building Surveyor.

Where alterations or improvements are found to have been made without any approval either whilst in a live tenancy or when leaving a property, IVH will recharge the customer the cost for putting the property back to the Repair standard. Enforcement action will be proportionate to the risk identified and will take account of customer circumstances and any steps taken to rectify issues

3.0 Leasehold & Shared Ownership Properties

The lease or shared ownership agreement will determine what alterations or improvements may be carried out within a leaseholder's or shared owner's property.

Leaseholders and shared owners must obtain written permission from Irwell Valley Homes (IVH) before any alteration or improvement works commence. Failure to obtain prior approval may result in enforcement action in line with the terms of the lease or tenancy agreement.

All applications for alterations or improvements must include sufficient detail, specifications and supporting information to enable the request to be fully assessed and considered. This may include plans, drawings, risk assessments, method statements, contractor details, certification requirements or any other information reasonably requested by IVH.

Leaseholders and shared owners may be required to pay an administration fee of £70 for processing alteration requests. Any applicable fees must be paid in advance.

The Property Manager will confirm whether the lease or agreement permits the proposed alteration. Where required, an Inspector or appropriately qualified colleague will assess whether the proposal is acceptable, safe and compliant with IVH requirements.

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Leaseholders and shared owners are responsible for ensuring that all necessary statutory approvals are obtained prior to works commencing, including but not limited to planning permission, building regulations approval, listed building consent and compliance with relevant health and safety legislation.

All works must be completed by suitably qualified, competent and appropriately insured contractors. Where required by IVH, leaseholders and shared owners must provide copies of relevant certifications, including electrical, gas or building compliance certificates upon completion of the works.

Alterations or improvements must not compromise the structure, safety, integrity or fire safety of the building, neighbouring properties or communal areas. IVH reserves the right to refuse permission for any proposed works considered unsuitable, unsafe or likely to negatively impact the building, services or other residents.

Where applicable, leaseholders and shared owners must ensure works do not affect existing warranties, guarantees or planned investment programmes.

All costs associated with the alteration, including inspections, post-inspections, approvals, remedial works and any professional fees, will be the responsibility of the leaseholder or shared owner unless otherwise agreed by IVH.

Where works carried out by a leaseholder or shared owner require remedial action, IVH may undertake the necessary works and recover the associated costs in accordance with the terms of the lease or agreement.

Where alterations affect communal or shared areas, any ongoing maintenance, repair or associated costs may be recoverable through the service charge in line with the lease agreement.

IVH reserves the right to require alterations to be reinstated to their original condition where works have been carried out without permission, are found to be unsafe, or where reinstatement is required under the terms of the lease or agreement.

4.0 Right to Compensation for Improvements

This is a right for tenants to claim compensation for certain improvements which they have made to their home at their own cost. It is a right to compensation (in certain circumstances) not a right to improve. Compensation is payable only at the end of the tenancy and considers depreciation, and wear and tear.

To make an application for compensation, IVH must be advised of the details of the improvement work undertaken. Checks will be made to ensure that IVH have received written permission to carry out the work and procedures have been followed.

If the customer is dissatisfied with our decision, they may appeal in writing, setting out their reasons of dissatisfaction. This will be reviewed by a manager, and a written decision will be sent to the customer. The decision will be held on the housing management system for future reference.

- 1.2 When a customer leaves the property and only where these rights are included in the tenancy agreement, customers may be entitled to compensation for some improvements carried out, but only for work IVH have given prior written consent for.

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The value of compensation is subject to depreciation and takes account of the life expectancy above, divided by the value on the agreed invoice.

Consideration of any repairs required, would also be made and deducted from any costs owed.

Below are our standard life cycle assumptions which we will use to consider any compensation request.

- Bathroom - life cycle 30 years
- Kitchen - life cycle 20 years
- Central heating - life cycle 30 years
- Boiler - life cycle 15 years
- Windows and doors- life cycle 30 years
- Rewiring - life cycle 30 years (no part rewires considered)

A typical example is noted below:

With IVH approval, a bathroom was installed with cost of materials £2,000. That cost has been evidenced (e.g. receipt and/or invoice with clear breakdown) prior to work commencing. Work has been post-inspected to the satisfaction of an IVH colleague.

If the customer leaves after 3 years and property is post-inspected by an IVH colleague who agrees the standard of installation is acceptable and in line with age. IVH therefore agree to pay 27/30ths of the original material cost:

$$£2000 \times (27/30) = £1,800$$

2.2 When a claim for compensation for improvement works is received, the tenancy agreement will first be checked for eligibility.

The following will also be checked:

- *The improvement must have been carried out after 1 December 1994.*
- *Work must be carried out must have been approved by IVH upon installation.*
- *You must claim before your tenancy ends, although any payment will only be made once your tenancy has ended.*
- *Any rent arrears, rechargeable repairs or legal costs that you owe, will be taken out of any compensation payment.*
- *If your tenancy is ended by a court order, there will be no entitlement to compensation.*
- *Once fitted to the property, the improvements become Landlords fixtures and fittings and should not be removed without written permission. If this does occur, we will recharge the cost of replacing the item and making good any damage caused. Enforcement action will be proportionate to the risk identified and will take account of customer circumstances and any steps taken to rectify issues*

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Associated Documents & Links

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The latest version of this procedure should be viewed online from The Hub and any printed version cannot be relied on as the most current version.

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