

Question Time: Thrive Homes' Repairs Services



Monday 7th October 2019

We're pleased to share with you the full Questions and Answers received as part of our recent Question Time event about our repair's services. All answers provided in this Q&A are provided in a general context for the benefit for all customers. Where questions have been submitted regarding a specific matter or property, we have responded directly.

If you have any further questions, feedback or would like to suggest another topic for a future event – just email: getinvolved@thrivehomes.org.uk

Independently hosted by:

Andy Sage, Customer Experience Panel Chair

Expert Panel:

Emma Murphy, Assistant Director – Property

Bryan Padley, Asset Manager

Warren Reynolds, Service Delivery Manager


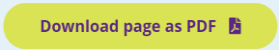
Q1: Expand on what is meant by 'The Thrive Deal'.

The Thrive Deal is a new way of working with customers to strengthen and create transparent, two-way relationships. It aims to make sure we are clear with you about what you can expect from us as your landlord (our 'offer') and what we expect from you as our customer (our 'ask'). We encourage you to read the information provided to you in hardcopy, which is also available on our website:

<https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/thrive-deal/>. Additional printed copies are also available upon request.

Q2: How can you obtain access to these documents if you don't have online access?

Our documents have been designed as digital first, but customers can contact us to request a printed copy. Alternatively, our website has the functionality to download documents into PDF file format which can then be printed at home or at a library. To

do this, just click on the  icon or  button wherever you are on the tenant area of our website.

Q3: The Thrive deal information pack shows certain issues that don't happen.

We'd be pleased to answer any queries regarding the Thrive Deal. Just get in touch by emailing: enquiries@thrivehomes.org.uk.

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Q4: There are some references in the pack to other bits of information that are not in the [Thrive Deal] pack, but are online. If you do not have access to the internet how do you access them? (Repair guides)

The full Repairs Guide is available as an online guide only. However, there is functionality to download relevant sections from it to print at home or at a library. Whilst we encourage the use of the online guide for ease and efficiency, you can get in touch on 0800 917 6077 for specific questions or information.

Q5: What about people that don't know how to email?

General enquiries can also be made via the myThrive app. Whilst the most efficient way to get your query answered is by using our digital services, you can still get in touch by phone.

Q6: I am a digital tenant and when I call in, I am told that I need to email and I don't know how to. If I have an emergency, what do I do?

Customers on digital tenancies are required to transact with us using digital services first and foremost. In the instance of an emergency, please call us on 0800 917 6077.

Q7: What Is included in maintaining the properties? Wider perspective please. Budget etc.

Thrive is responsible for carrying out repairs and maintenance as a result of fair wear and tear in accordance with your tenancy agreement and our offer and ask documents. This includes but is not limited to: gas appliances, heating and hot water, toilets, baths, pipes and sinks, electrical wiring and any fans etc., common areas such as lifts and communal entrances, the structure and exterior of the building – including the roof, walls, windows and external doors, ceilings internally and in communal areas.

A budget is set annually. This is based on a benchmarked cost per property and we usually deliver the service within budget, which is monitored by the Service Delivery Manager.

Thrive is not responsible for repairs or replacements as a result of damage caused by customers, their families and/or visitors. We are also not responsible for:

- Fencing between neighbouring properties or facing non-communal areas
- Items that are gifted at the start of the tenancy
- Trees in private gardens.

Typically, Thrive maintains the fittings within the property that we have installed, with some minor exceptions. If tenants have fitted or accepted previous occupier self-

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improvements, we would not maintain these. Individual fences between neighbours are a customer responsibility.

You can diagnose, troubleshoot and report repairs using our online repairs guide: <https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/report-a-repair/>.

Q8: I called regarding a leak in our block where a copper pipe had burst in the loft and slipped down and marked my ceiling. When I rang up two people told me it was my responsibility.

In response to receiving this question, we have attended and completed the repair. Thrive is responsible to make good any damage to the fabric of the ceiling as a result of the leak. In accordance with your tenancy agreement, Thrive is not responsible for decoration but we would seal, and stain block the area.

Q9: In the communal area at Frogmore Court, there is a big tree that was condemned a long time ago.

This tree was inspected in 2016 by a specialist contractor and was not condemned. There were some remedial works required to some of the trees at the time and they have been completed. However, Thrive has arranged for this to be re-inspected.

Q10: Fencing, does the right-hand fence always belong to the property?

Not always, this depends on the deeds of the property. You can find out which fence belongs to your property by emailing: enquiries@thrivehomes.org.uk.

Q11: How easy it for residents to get the information regarding who owns the fence from the deeds?

This information is provided at sign up, but if you'd like to check this again please email: enquiries@thrivehomes.org.uk.

Q12: Can you add a fence inside your own boundary?

If you'd like to make any alterations to your home, you must first seek permission from Thrive Homes. You can do this by emailing: enquiries@thrivehomes.org.uk.

Q13: Is there a height limit to the fence?

This depends on the location of the fence, information can be located on your Local Authorities Planning Portal via their website. You can locate your Local Authority and get in touch with them for more information here: <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

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Q14: Regarding Tree issues: Before the council would look after trees but now it's the tenant's responsibility. As the tree grows older and bigger the cost to maintain it goes up and a tree surgeon is not cheap.

We can appreciate this can be expensive but trees in individual gardens are the responsibility of the customer as per the terms of your tenancy agreement.

Q15: Who's responsibility is it for overhanging branches from the neighbouring property and what happens if there are a lot of branches to cut? Is Thrive going to back us when we give the cuttings back to the private property?

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the private owner and therefore we advise customers to first speak with their neighbour to try and resolve the matter. Thrive is on hand to support in these discussions and will arrange for our Health & Safety Manager to inspect if required.

Q16: I would like to know why Thrive stopped doing the repairs it used to do and customers now have to pay extra for them to be done.

Thrive wants to provide a fair deal for customers, and will carry out all repairs that fall under our responsibility as per the terms of your tenancy agreement and that are as a result of fair wear and tear. In fairness, we cannot carry out repairs as a result of wilful or careless damage which fall to the responsibility and/or charge to the customers.

We don't currently offer a paid for service, but we will consider offering this if the demand from customers is there. You can let us know by giving feedback:

<https://www.thrivehomes.org.uk/feedback/>

Q17: How many people would you need to have the handyperson service take place?

Thrive will look into the feasibility of introducing a handyperson service. 80% of tonight's audience would be interested, if you'd like to express further interest let us know: <https://www.thrivehomes.org.uk/feedback/>. Please note, this would be a chargeable service and is not able to be subsidised.

Q18: I was told a couple of years ago that handy man service was coming, and it would cost £180 a week. Is there any more information on this?

At present Thrive do not offer a handyperson service.

Q19: Could Thrive recommend a handyperson service be vetted by Thrive?

Thrive is not able to recommend a vetted service but you may be able to find a solution using <https://www.checkatrade.com/>.

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Q20: Have you got a fascia board programme too?

Fascia boards will be replaced if required during the decorating or roofing programme works.

Q21: Would leaseholders get charged for the cleaning of the gutters?

This will be a service chargeable item, applicable leaseholders will be informed accordingly. To enquire, email: enquiries@thrivehomes.org.uk

Q22: How frequently should gutters be checked?

Thrive is about to embark on their annual guttering inspection and clearing programme. This is a new programme introduced this year to reduce issues with guttering. Thrive will be using their specialist equipment to carry out these works.

Q23: You're saying we will have two visits: one to clear the gutters and then two weeks later to repair the gutters.

If we find that guttering is broken when we clear them then we will need to attend again to carry out the repairs. If we require access to your property to carry out a repair, we will arrange an appointment at a mutually convenient time. We hope that by introducing this programme we will be able to prevent broken gutters in the long run.

Q24: When I phoned Thrive, I was told that gutters were on an 60 day maintenance programme.

We aim to complete planned repairs within 60 days, therefore you have been advised the correct timescale for these works. However, we prioritise emergency repairs and where access is required, we will arrange an appointment at a mutually convenient time.

Q25: I would like to know why you do not repair garden fences. I have asked several people who are in various private rentals how their landlords manage this, and they all say that the landlord is responsible for these repairs. As I am sure you are aware, fencing is very expensive, and I wonder why you think that people in "social housing" have the money to do this. For example, my neighbours who are home owners spent £2000 replacing their garden fence. I would be interested in your comments. I would like to say that my experience of your repairs service has been excellent.

Thrive is only responsible for fencing which borders a communal boundary or a public alleyway or access route. Fencing that is between neighbouring properties is the responsibility of the customer in accordance with your tenancy agreement.

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As part of the transfer promises with Three Rivers District Council, Thrive agreed to replace £2Million fencing within the first 5 years of transfer. This was completed in March 2013 as part of our agreement with the council.

We have now had to re-align our budgets to ensure our properties meet the Decent Homes Standards and health and safety requirements and obligations under the terms of your tenancy. As such, fencing does not form part of this.

Q26: I carried out a mutual exchange and I have asked you to fit three new internal doors as mine are broken by the last tenant.

Our mutual exchange procedure outlines that when accepting or considering a mutual exchange, the customer takes the property on in its current condition. Any repairs that are the customer's responsibility are transferred to the incoming tenant. Our surveyor attends at the beginning of the mutual exchange process and outlines any repairs the existing customer needs to carry out – both parties are made aware of anything that is outstanding and sign to accept responsibility for it.

Prior to the commencement of the exchange a full electrical and gas safety check is carried out. If you have any fire safety concerns and there is a fire safety aspect required for your doors, we will happily arrange for a surveyor to attend your home and carry out an inspection and outline any repairs deemed necessary to be undertaken. Thrive will carry out repairs that are our responsibility and inform you of any that are your responsibility.

For more information on the mutual exchange process, visit:

<https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/advice-information/i-want-to-move/mutual-exchange/>

Q27: Could Thrive as a minimum (cheapest) put a chicken fence to outline a boundary if there was storm damage?

If the fence is the customer's responsibility, then this is not something Thrive would be able to carry out. Some contents insurance policies may cover fencing replacement, but you would need to check with your insurer.

Q28: What happens if fences get damaged through storm damage? Are these covered by Thrive's building insurance?

If the damaged fence is Thrive's responsibility, we will arrange the repair. All other fences are the responsibility of the customer. We encourage customers to take out contents insurance which may cover replacement of damaged fences.

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Q29: Can I claim on my building insurance (a tenant says you can claim through your content insurance)

Some contents insurance policies may cover fencing replacement, but you would need to check with your insurer. We always encourage customers to have in place contents insurance regardless.

Q30: Is there a policy on storm damage and do Thrive have an insurance company that they recommend?

My Home contents insurance is recommended by the National Housing Federation. Find out more on <https://www.thistlemhome.co.uk/> or contact 0345 450 7288. You can use a comparison site to find the best deal with other insurers, but always check the policy wording to ensure you're getting the right level of cover.

Q31: I had to do my own fence as it was rotten and it cost me £1000 and then a property by my son's flat - Thrive did their fencing, why?

Thrive is responsible for fencing which borders a communal boundary or a public alleyway or access route. It would've been replaced because it fell into this category.

Q32: When there was a property that was empty, Thrive came with a lady and showed the flat and it had everything in it such as carpet. Thrive came back and cleared everything in the property, why could you not leave the stuff behind for the tenant?

Thrive has to be really careful when gifting any furniture or carpets because of the regulations we are required to comply with for example, fire regulations. We offer items where possible and donate them to the charity shop if it is feasible to do so.

Q33: During a mutual exchange you have an inspector that visits the property. If a repair crops up that couldn't have been seen at the time of a mutual exchange, would Thrive do the repair?

Yes, if it is Thrive's responsibility and has not been caused as a result of careless or wilful damage.

Q44: Would you allow a property without fire doors to mutual exchange and the tenant who says there were fire doors?

We would request that the outgoing customer replaces them. If they aren't replaced prior to the exchange taking place, the incoming customer would be asked to replace these at their own expense.

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Q45: When you email a repair could we have an acknowledgment that it has been received?

We have recently launched a new way to diagnose, troubleshoot and report repairs on our website: <https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/report-a-repair/>

When you submit a repair via our website, you will receive a copy of your report which confirms our receipt. If you don't receive this, check your junk or spam folder. A text message and/or email is also sent once a repair appointment has been scheduled.

We can confirm that this is working, but please let us know if you do not receive any of these receipts by emailing: enquiries@thrivehomes.org.uk or give feedback via: <https://www.thrivehomes.org.uk/feedback/>

Q46: We get a text that only gives us a number, why can't we have a description of the job?

The number you receive on a text message is the 'job number' reference. There is a technical reason for this due to the number of characters we can include in a text message, as well as integration with our appointment booking system. We appreciate your feedback and will look into improving this and feedback via our Customer Experience Group.

Q47: Why does it take so long for emergency repairs to be sorted.

Whilst we appreciate every repair feels like an emergency to our customers, the definition of an emergency repair is usually deemed to be a risk to life or property and is attended to within 24 hours of being reported. Currently we have a 100% attendance on emergency repairs. Our emergency repairs service is to ensure issues are made safe, however where possible we aim to conclude the repair on first attendance. Sometimes this isn't always possible depending on the nature of the repair, and in these instances a follow up repair is scheduled.

Q48: Is your contact centre open 24 hours a day, 7 days per week?

Yes, Thrive's Customer Contact Centre is open from 8am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday. An out of hours contact centre take calls on Thrive's behalf outside of these hours for all emergency repairs.

Q49. It takes a long time to get through to the out of hours contact centre.

We have checked the call times for September 2019 and the longest call wait time is 9 minutes and 34 seconds - this was only on one occasion. Thrive hold monthly contract meetings with the provider and call wait times are monitored and discussed

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at this meeting. Our Customer Experience Group will review the figures over a longer period of time and recommend any action required.

If you experience an issue else when, please let us know by:

<https://www.thrivehomes.org.uk/feedback/>

Q50: If maintenance of properties and gardens is included, there is also the aspect about the quality of service delivered by Thrive for tenants.

Our Customer Relations team carry out quarterly inspections of communal grounds maintenance and cleaning and have regular contract meetings.

We carry out post inspections on all works which are carried out over the value of £500 as well as 10% of those under, to check quality and quantity. Stringent independent telephone surveys are carried out to 10% of customers who received a repair or communal service per month. Currently our overall repairs satisfaction is at 94%. However we know that sometimes we do get it wrong and we appreciate your valuable feedback. You can let us know how we're doing anytime via:

<https://www.thrivehomes.org.uk/feedback/>

Q51: Who do we email our feedback too and who can I send it to the right person?

The best way to give feedback is via our website:

<https://www.thrivehomes.org.uk/feedback/>. Alternatively you can email: enquiries@thrivehomes.org.uk

Q51: What is the email address to the enquiry inbox?

enquiries@thrivehomes.org.uk

Q52: I send in complaints about repairs but do not hear anything back. I would like to discuss the repairs.

All complaints are registered in accordance with the complaints process. You will receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days and a response within 15 working days of the acknowledgement. If you have failed to receive this, please get in touch by emailing: complaints@thrivehomes.org.uk

For more information on our complaints process, visit:

<https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/thrive-deal/our-relationship/complaints-process/>

Q53: I live in a building which seems to be subsiding.

All potential subsidence claims are referred to our insurers to review, it's at this point that Thrive is no longer part of the process until the review is completed. Once

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complete, they will appoint loss adjustors and specialists to review the claim and undertake testing. We are bound by their timescales. Where 3rd party owners are involved e.g. the Local Authority, other requirements apply. In this instance the insurer has advised they require 12 months monitoring before they will be able to confirm what action they are prepared to take. The 12 months for this particular property will be up in October 2019. We have reviewed the process and put new steps in place to ensure customers are kept informed at quarterly intervals.

The following questions were unable to be answered during the event. We have provided our responses below and have replied to property specific matters individually.

Q54: What is a Home Plan visit?

This is an annual visit where we will talk to you and record details of the property's condition as well as who is living in your home. These details will be recorded in an inventory.

After this visit, any repairs that are flagged will be planned into our work schedule. If repairs are identified as your responsibility, you will be given time to put them right. You shouldn't need to see us again for a further year, unless your home requires a gas or electric safety check or an unexpected repair is required.

As part of the Thrive Deal, every customer will be visited each year over the next four years to have a 'Home Plan' visit. We will contact you to make an appointment.

You can find out more by visiting our website and searching 'Home Plan' or visit: <https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/thrive-deal/your-home/>

Q55: When will my kitchen and bathroom be replaced?

In accordance with our plans we expect kitchens to last a minimum of 20 years and bathrooms to last a minimum of 30 years. This is in line with the Governments Decent Homes Standard. We set our budgets and work schedules against these life spans and the data we hold against each property. This is why it is important to let us in for Home Plan visits so that we can verify the data we hold for your property and the anticipated replacement date.

We carry out Home Plan visits once a year. One of these visits during a five-year period will assess how the kitchen and other components are performing. At this point we would re-assess the potential replacement date; hence we would not replace kitchens and bathrooms if they are still perfectly serviceable or a minor repair would suffice. You can diagnose and report repairs using our diagnostic tool on our website: <https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/report-a-repair/>

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Q56: When you are doing my windows

We expect windows to last a minimum of 30 years. We carry out Home Plan visits once a year. One of these visits during a five-year period will assess how the windows and other components are performing. At this point we would re-assess the potential replacement date, hence we would not replace windows if it was still perfectly serviceable or a minor repair would suffice. We would review if parts became obsolete and they became a security or safety risk.

You can diagnose and report repairs using our diagnostic tool on our website: <https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/report-a-repair/>

Q57: I live in a sheltered scheme, when will my kitchen be replaced?

We expect kitchens to last a minimum of 20 years. We carry out Home Plan visits once a year. One of these visits during a five-year period will assess how the kitchen and other components are performing. At this point we would re-assess the potential replacement date, hence we would not replace a kitchen if it was still perfectly serviceable or a minor repair would suffice.

Q58: The downpipe at the back of my bungalow is blocked

As a result of receiving this report via our Question Time event, this matter has now been resolved. Previous to this Thrive had no record of this issue being reported, please ensure that future repairs are reported using our online diagnostic tool via: <https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/report-a-repair/>

Q59: I was advised an electric plug was to be installed under the worktop. I've heard nothing. Also, the hot water supply to the kitchen takes an age to get hot. The bathroom hot water takes seconds.

This repair has now been resolved. Please use our online repairs diagnostic tool to report any future repair issues: <https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/report-a-repair/>

Q60: When are you going to fix the communal door?

In regards to this specific matter, the doors to the three blocks had an issue with the software that was used for the access system. The company who installed and managed the system went out of business. Whilst we were searching for a solution, we switched the system off so that residents, relatives and carers who did not have working access fobs could access the blocks. The parts were ordered through our door entry repairs contractor; however, they are manufactured abroad and there was a 4 -5 week lead time.

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This work has now been completed, and we are now in the process of programming all the new fobs and installing new SIM cards. We hope to have this finally resolved shortly and apologise for the inconvenience.

Q61: I reported cracks in my property approx. 3.5 years ago and nothing seems to have happened since.

Thrive has to work with our insurers and are bound by their timescales. The insurance process is unfortunately quite slow as they need to collect evidence of the cause and damage. In this instance they are liaising with a 3rd party owner of the trees, unfortunately this is out of our hands.

Q62: Our bathroom has the original pipes from when it was built.

If there is a specific issue with the water draining away or the pressure, we will investigate this. Typically, when a bathroom is refurbished on a 30-year lifecycle, we would review the condition of the existing pipework and consider if it needs replacing at that point, or if an engineer attends and reports an issue. We would not always do this as a matter of course on a bathroom refurbishment, as it could affect many rooms in the property beyond the bathroom, and in most cases the pipework is still in serviceable condition.

Q67: There was a leak and as a result there is a hole in my bathroom ceiling and dried damp patches have appeared. Just wondering if Thrive will carry out any works?

Thrive Homes will repair any holes that have been caused by a leak in your ceiling, and stain block and seal any areas affected by this. However, decorating is a customer responsibility.

Q68: Repairs issues, wet room required, and kitchen bulb broken.

Thank you for reporting this issue via the Question Time event. Previous to this Thrive had no record of this issue being reported, please ensure that future repairs are reported using our online diagnostic tool via:

<https://customers.thrivehomes.org.uk/report-a-repair/>

We are pleased to advise that a pre-inspection has been completed and the necessary order has been raised.

We can provide advice on the correct bulb to use by sending a photo of the light and fitting to: enquires@thrivehomes.org.uk.

Requests for wet rooms are handled as part of Occupational Living which is handled by your Local Authority.