

# **Poole Housing Partnership Ltd**

## **Re-Charge Policy**

**October 07**

### **What is a re-charge?**

PHP's repairs and maintenance service assists residents to keep their homes in good order. However there are some circumstances where repair or maintenance work is the responsibility of the resident, and whilst Poole Housing Partnership Ltd (PHP) can carry out this work, the cost is rechargeable to the resident.

### **Why do PHP have a Re-charge Policy?**

We are committed to making sure we are clear with residents about what work we are responsible for, and what work residents are responsible for. By making sure we are consistent about the way decisions are made about re-charging residents for work, we can maximise the repairs and maintenance budget that can then be spent on looking after and improving all residents homes.

The service is paid for from all tenants rents. Whilst the majority of residents look after their home, a small minority cause deliberate damage or do not keep their home in reasonable condition. This policy seeks to ensure that residents neglecting their homes or causing damage are recharged, and avoids other residents having to meet the cost.

### **Who does this policy apply to?**

All tenants and leaseholders in properties managed by PHP.

### **What can I expect when I have re-chargeable work carried out?**

- Tell you whether you are responsible for paying the costs of the work at the time you order it.
- When you request a repair listed on the Recharge Schedule we will tell you at the time how much it will cost. For all other rechargeable work we will provide you with an estimate of the cost within 7 working days.
- We will send you an invoice for the work within 5 working days of ordering the work.
- All work will be carried out to 'The Poole Standard' which describes the quality of materials and workmanship to be employed when works are carried out on behalf of PHP.

### **When will PHP re-charge for a repair?**

This policy outlines the circumstances when PHP will re-charge you for the cost of work to your home.

You will be recharged if:

- The work is needed because of damage, caused either deliberately, accidentally, as a result of neglect or the actions of a member of your household or visitors to your home. Some common examples of repairs needed as a result of damage or neglect are:
  - Damage to internal and external doors
  - Damage to kitchen units and worktops
  - Broken windows or window locks
  - Missed appointments with our contractor
  - Blocked toilet or drainage
- You fit any type of installation or fixed appliance requiring repair or maintenance that we did not give you our **written** agreement to install. Where you have mutually exchanged into the property, this includes any installation of fixed appliance made by the previous tenant and not by PHP, such as built in cookers or electric showers.
- You have altered the property without our written agreement and have not reinstated the property to its original condition.
- Having obtained prior written permission and agreed to maintain, the installation was poorly fitted by you, or somebody employed by you to fit it. We will be happy to offer you advice before you install an appliance or fixture. Please ask us about this.
- If we later discover that you are responsible for works that we have already carried out.

These circumstances can apply whilst you are living in a property or if you are moving out of a property managed by PHP, including if you are exchanging properties with another resident.

### **What if it wasn't my fault?**

Should any damage be caused by a member of your household, an invited or uninvited visitor to your home or any communal areas if you live in a block of flats, then as the tenant you are still responsible for paying for the damage to be put right. Where the damage has been caused by someone not invited to your home and you feel the damage is deliberate or a result of vandalism, you should report the matter to the Police to investigate and ask for the Crime Reference number. Where a Crime Reference number is given to PHP we may not recharge the cost of the work to you.

### **Does PHP consider individuals circumstances when deciding whether to re-charge work?**

Unless the rechargeable work is an emergency (see below), you will normally need to pay before it is carried out. PHP will normally recharge work when it falls into one of the three categories outlined above.

However we will consider residents individual circumstances. This includes the nature of the work in relation to whether there are any factors that make the resident vulnerable, such as:

- The physical health and wellbeing of the resident
- Any support provided to the resident to maintain their tenancy by PHP's tenancy support team, or other agency.

We may require supporting evidence of this, but will discuss this with you. We may be able to make an arrangement to pay by instalments. This is discussed later in this policy.

### **What is the difference between emergency and non-urgent rechargeable work?**

Emergency work include:

- Work to make the property secure
- Work to reinstate services such as, water, sewage, electricity
- Lost keys or damaged locks

Non-urgent work include:

- Cracked windows
- Repairs to internal doors and walls
- Damage to kitchen or bathroom fittings

### **How much will rechargeable work cost?**

Please ask us for the current Recharge Schedule which gives the costs for the most common rechargeable work. Wherever possible we will provide you with an accurate cost for any rechargeable works. The rates are based on the actual cost to PHP of carrying out the work. Where a cost is based on information you provide and we later find that additional work is required we will inform you promptly of any additional cost you may be responsible for.

### **At what stage do I actually have to pay for the work?**

- For emergency works, we will tell you what you have to pay at the stage that we order the work and confirm this by invoice within 5 working days. We expect payment within 28 days.

If you choose to pay for the work before it is carried out, or pay the invoice in full within 28 days you will be entitled to a 25% discount on the cost. The discount will be shown on the invoice.

Please note that the 25% discount is only available for the routine work listed on the Recharge Schedule, and not for any works where we have quoted a specific price.

- All non-urgent repairs must be paid for before the work is carried out.
- If you are a 'PHP Plus' member, you have the opportunity to pay for both emergency and non-urgent rechargeable work after it has been carried out. Please ask us for more information about joining our PHP Plus rewards scheme for residents.

### **How do I pay PHP for the recharge?**

You can pay in the same way you pay your rent. If you already pay your rent or service charge by direct debit, the cost of the recharge will simply be added to this, although you can make alternative arrangements to pay when you order the rechargeable repair if you prefer.

You can pay by debit card either by:

- Following the 'pay for it' link on [www.yourphp.org.uk](http://www.yourphp.org.uk) website. You will need your:
  - Rent Account Number,
  - Rent Account Name
  - Address
  - Postcode
- By phoning 01202 672932 and follow the instructions. You can do this 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have a swipe card, you can pay at any Post Office or outlet displaying the Payzone or Paypoint in the same way as you pay your rent. Please ask us if you would like more information about getting or paying by swipecard, or would like to know about local Payzone or Paypoint outlets.

### **What if I can't afford to pay for the work in one payment?**

If you can't afford to pay for the cost of the re-charge in one payment, please talk to our Income Recovery Team, who will negotiate a payment plan with you, based on your individual circumstances. This will enable you to pay an agreed amount over a period of time.

If you arrange to make your payments by direct debit and do not miss any payments you can also receive the 25% discount on the cost of the work.

To help prevent you getting into too much debt, we will not let you order any other non-urgent rechargeable work until you have finished paying for the first one.

### **What will happen if I don't pay for the recharge?**

If you don't pay for rechargeable work to be carried out, we will seek to recover the money through PHP's income recovery procedures. This could ultimately result in a summons to appear in Court. If actions in Court are successful then you will incur Court costs and your credit rating will be affected.

PHP will also will refuse any further repairs work and you will only be entitled to emergency repairs only. You may also be excluded from any planned improvements, for example a new kitchen or bathroom, or put to the end of the programme.

In addition, we do not allow residents with outstanding debts to mutually exchange with another resident or to transfer to another PHP home.

### **What if I don't want the work to be carried out?**

On rare occasions we have to carry out essential work and recharge you in order to keep the property in good order, even if you do not want the work carried out. We have the right to do this under the terms of the tenancy condition that you signed when you moved into your home. If this situation arises we will always discuss it with you first, and explain what will happen if we cannot reach an agreement about getting the work done.

### **How will PHP deal with deliberate damage caused by a tenant?**

This only happens in a minority of households, however in cases where it is clear that deliberate and wilful damage has been caused by a tenant, then we may report the damage to the Police for investigation. Where a tenant is in breach of their tenancy conditions, we will consider whether it is appropriate to begin Possession Proceedings against the tenant. This could ultimately result in the tenant losing their home.

### **What do I do if I am not happy with the way PHP has handled recharging work to me?**

If you are unhappy about the way in which we have recharged work to you, you may wish to follow our complaints procedure. Please ask us for our leaflet about making a complaint, or refer to your copy of the Tenants Handbook for full details. You could also contact the Citizens Advice Bureau on 01202 680838 for independent legal advice on your circumstances.

### **How will we learn from, and make sure this policy meets the needs of both residents and PHP?**

We will:

- Carry out a 'satisfaction survey' with a random selection of residents who have had some rechargeable work carried out to make sure that they are happy not only with the work that has been carried out, but also to make sure that residents were happy with their dealings with us. We will consider the results of the satisfaction survey to make sure that

any lessons can be taken forward and used to improve the way we carry out rechargeable work in the future.

- Monitor our performance against the service standards and any complaints received (given earlier) to make sure we are keeping the promises we make to you when you have some rechargeable work done.