

Housing Repairs Handbook



St Albans
City & District Council

Foreword

Dear Resident,

Welcome to the St Albans City & District Council Housing Repairs Handbook.

We are committed to keeping your home safe, secure and well maintained. This handbook explains how to report a repair, what you can expect from us, and what we ask of you as a tenant. It also provides important advice on safety, home maintenance and avoiding unnecessary costs.

The quickest way to report and track repairs is through your **MyStAlbans online** account, available 24 hours a day. If you cannot use online services, you can still contact us by phone, email or in person.

By working together — you by reporting repairs promptly, and us by providing a reliable service — we can keep your home in the best condition possible.

Please keep this handbook safe for reference. If you have any questions, our contact details are included at the back.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth Heavey

Gareth Heavey
Contracts Manager
St Albans City & District Council





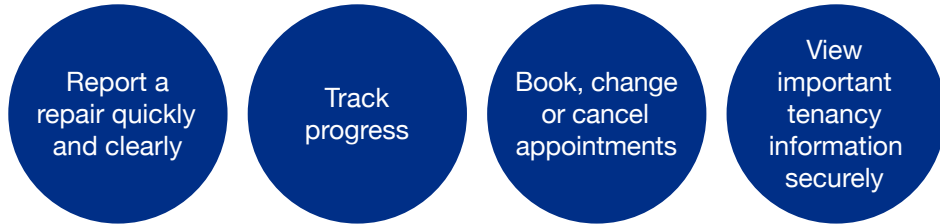
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Using your online MyStAlbans District account

The MyStAlbans online portal is the quickest and most convenient way to manage your tenancy and repairs. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, on any smartphone, tablet or computer.

With MyStAlbans you can



How to register

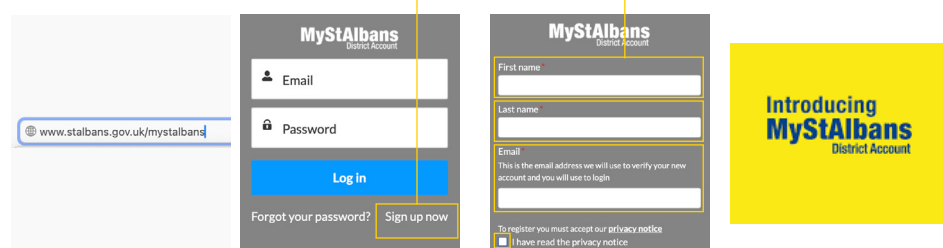
- 1

Visit: **www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans**
- 2

Select: **Sign-up now**
- 3

Enter: your **email** and create a **secure password**
- 4

Add: your **contact details** and confirm your **tenancy address**



Tip: Using MyStAlbans is faster than phoning and gives you a record of your request. If you need help using digital services, contact us for support or alternative arrangements.

How to report that a repair is needed

Before contacting us, please check this handbook to confirm who is responsible.

When reporting a repair, provide

Your full name, address and contact number

A clear description of the issue and its location

Any immediate risks
(e.g. water near electrics)

Times when an adult (18+) will be at home

Any additional information
(pets, vulnerabilities, warranties)

Ways to report

Online (*preferred*): **MyStAlbans** portal

Email (*general repairs*):
stalbandsrepairs@morgansindall.com

Email (*heating and gas*):
gasandheatingrepairs@stalbands.gov.uk

Phone: **01727 819256**

Option 1: Heating repairs

Option 2: All other repairs

Hours: Mon-Thu: 08:45 - 17:15
Fri: 08:45 - 16:45

Out of hours emergencies

Call **01727 819256**

We will make safe immediately and complete full repairs during working hours.

Non-emergencies or tenant-responsibility items may be recharged.

Other utilities

Thames Water Leaks:
0800 714 614

Thames Water Sewers:
0800 316 9800

Affinity Water Emergencies:
0345 357 2407

Gas Emergencies (*National Gas*):
0800 111 999

Power Cuts (*UK Power Networks*):
0800 316 3105



What happens after you report a repair

We will

1. Diagnose the problem from the information you provide
2. Book an appointment, or
3. Arrange a surveyor visit for complex issues

Appointments

- If you miss your appointment, we will leave a card with rebooking details
- If you cannot attend, please contact us promptly to rearrange

Right to Buy applications

- While a Right to Buy application is live, we only carry out **emergency repairs**
- Routine repairs will restart once you confirm in writing that the application is withdrawn

False information

- Providing incorrect or misleading information may result in recharges

Tip: Giving full, accurate details helps us resolve your repair more quickly. If your repair qualifies under the statutory Right to Repair scheme, we will tell you and explain the process.



Repair priorities and the Right to Repair

We categorise repairs to ensure urgent issues are dealt with quickly.

Emergency repairs

Attend within 2 hours, make safe within 24 hours.

Examples: *Severe leaks, total loss of electricity, unsafe wiring, insecure property, sewage overflow, no heating (winter), blocked only toilet, structural collapse risk.*

Right to Repair (legal duty)

As a Secure Tenant you have the right to certain small urgent repairs being completed within statutory timescales under the **Right to Repair (Secure Tenants) Regulations 1994**.

Examples include:

Blocked sink, basin or bath:
7 working days

Partial loss of power:
3 working days

Toilet not flushing (*if only one in property*): **1 working day**

Faulty light fitting:
7 working days

Note: If we fail to complete a qualifying repair within the set time, you may be entitled to compensation. We will provide details if this applies.



Appointments and access

Appointment slots

- 🕒 8am – 1pm - Morning
- 🕒 1pm – 5pm - Afternoon
- 🕒 10am – 2pm - School run slot (*on request*)

Your responsibilities

- You must allow access for repairs, inspections and safety checks
- We will give at least 24 hours' notice, except in emergencies
- In emergencies, we may enter immediately to prevent serious harm

If you need adjustments (e.g. interpreter, carer present, different time slot), please tell us when booking.



Service standards (code of behaviour)

When working in your home, staff and contractors will

- Show identification and arrive on time
- Be polite, respectful and professional
- Explain the work and keep you informed
- Work safely and protect your belongings
- Reconnect essential services where possible
- Clear up before leaving

They will not

- Smoke, eat, drink or swear in your home
- Play music or use personal phones
- Leave tools unattended in unsafe places
- Be alone with children

Safety and compliance

[Fire](#) | [Legionella](#) | [Asbestos](#) | [Gas](#) | [Electrical](#) | [Damp and mould](#)



Fire safety saves lives

Keep communal areas, corridors and stairwells completely clear of personal belongings (*no bikes, prams, or furniture*).

Never leave cooking unattended and avoid using chip pans.

Do not overload sockets or use damaged extension leads.

Test smoke alarms monthly and replace batteries if needed.

Store matches and candles safely, out of reach of children.

Keep escape routes and key access points clear at all times.

Ensure flat and communal fire doors are always fully closed. Report any defects or damaged door closers immediately.

The Council carries out regular fire risk assessments in all blocks and shared buildings, maintains fire doors and alarms, and acts promptly on any safety actions identified.

In an emergency...

If there is a fire, get out, stay out, and call **999** immediately.



Legionella bacteria can form in standing or stagnant water, especially in shared water systems such as blocks of flats or communal tanks.

Run taps and showers for a few minutes after long periods of non-use.

Keep hot water hot and cold water cold to reduce risk.

Clean shower heads regularly and report any limescale build-up or temperature issues.

Avoid tampering with thermostatic controls or plumbing.

The Council carries out regular water-hygiene risk assessments in communal systems, flushes infrequently used outlets, and manages temperature controls.

If you notice discoloured water or unusual smells, **report this immediately.**

Safety and compliance

Fire | Legionella | Asbestos | Gas | Electrical | Damp and mould

Asbestos

Some older homes (built or refurbished before 2000) may contain asbestos

Do not drill, sand, cut or scrape materials such as artex ceilings, floor tiles or old pipe lagging.

If you're unsure whether something might contain asbestos, stop work and contact us.

Report any damaged, flaking or crumbling materials.

All known asbestos locations are recorded in our Asbestos Register and managed through the Council's Asbestos Management Plan, which is reviewed annually under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

Licensed contractors carry out any necessary removal or encapsulation work.

Never attempt to remove or test materials yourself – we will always inspect safely.

Gas

Gas safety protects you, your family and your neighbours

We carry out an annual gas safety check for every property with a gas supply.

You must allow access for this inspection – it is a legal requirement.

Unsafe appliances may be disconnected for your safety.

We maintain and service all Council-owned gas appliances and ensure compliance with the Gas Safety (*Installation & Use*) Regulations 1998.

Tenants are responsible for the safe maintenance of any personal gas cookers or appliances using a Gas Safe registered engineer.

If you smell gas: turn off the gas at the meter if safe, open doors and windows, avoid electrical switches, and call **0800 111 999** (National Gas Emergency).

After National Gas has attended, contact our Repairs Team on **01727 819256** (*option 1*) for follow-up work.

Electrical

Electricity can cause serious harm if not used safely

Do not overload plug sockets or use multiple extension leads.

Report any sparking, overheating or damaged sockets immediately.

Never attempt electrical repairs yourself.

Keep water away from electrical appliances.

We complete an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) at least every five years and at each tenancy change.

Unsafe wiring is disconnected immediately.

We also maintain and repair solar-panel systems where installed.

Switching to LED bulbs and turning off unused appliances can help reduce energy costs and carbon footprint.

If you experience a power cut, call UK Power Networks on **0800 316 3105**

Damp & mould

Damp and mould can affect your health and damage your home

Report any signs of damp or mould as soon as possible – we'll investigate within 10 working days in line with Awaab's Law.

Keep rooms warm and ventilated where possible.

Wipe away condensation on windows and tiles to prevent mould growth.

Do not paint over mould – report it so we can treat it safely.

Council responsibilities
We must investigate and remedy damp and mould quickly and keep residents informed in writing until the issue is resolved.

If you are unsure what to do, please refer to the Council's Damp and Mould Policy for further guidance. You can find this on the Council's website by selecting Housing > Council tenants > Mould and damp, or you can request a copy from the Customer Services team.

See the **Handy Hints** section for advice on preventing condensation and mould

Tenant responsibilities

Tenants must

- Report repairs promptly and prevent further damage
- Allow access for inspections and legal safety checks
- Keep the home clean and decorated to a reasonable standard
- Maintain gardens, paths and boundaries where responsible
- Replace light bulbs, fuses, plugs, batteries and smoke alarm batteries
- Use drains and toilets responsibly (*blockages you cause are rechargeable*)
- Look after your own fixtures, fittings and appliances
- Avoid storing flammable items indoors
- Lofts should not be used for storage due to safety and insulation requirements

Insurance

We insure the building, not your belongings. You should arrange contents insurance, including for flooring, furniture and appliances.

Note: These responsibilities form part of your **Tenancy Agreement**. Failure to comply may result in recharges or tenancy enforcement action.

Planned improvements

To maintain your home, we carry out an ongoing programme of maintenance and improvement works

Typical works include

- Cavity and external wall insulation
- Loft insulation
- Window and door replacement
- Roofing
- Door entry systems
- Kitchen and bathroom modernisation
- Boiler servicing and replacement
- Lift servicing

In certain cases, when you move, the Council may reimburse some of the costs of approved improvements that have added value to your home. For more information, contact Customer Services on **01727 819256** or download this pdf:

www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/HRA%20Grant%20Leaflet%20-%20v1.1.pdf

Planned programmes are identified through inspections by housing surveyors and data from the Council's Stock Condition Survey, which sets out required works for the next 30 years to maintain homes in good condition.

Tenant improvements and alterations

You must obtain written permission before carrying out improvements other than decoration.

Examples include

- New kitchens or bathrooms
- Showers or extra radiators
- Structural changes (*walls, porches, extensions*)
- Gas or electrical works
- Laminate or wooden flooring
- Sheds, garages, hardstandings or loft works

Process

- Apply via **MyStAlbans** with drawings, contractor details and materials
- We assess safety, maintenance and impact on lettings
- Some works may need Planning or Building Control approval
- Completion certificates (*gas/electric*) must be provided

Apply for permission to make improvements to your home

You can apply for permission for your own improvements quickly via your MyStAlbans District account. Visit www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans and complete the 'Tenant Improvements' form with details of your proposed works.

Rechargeable repairs policy

When we recharge

- Deliberate damage, neglect, misuse (*including by pets/visitors*)
- Poor DIY or unauthorised alterations
- Non-emergency call-outs
- Clearance of belongings/rubbish at the end of the tenancy
- Garage misuse or unsafe storage

Exemptions

- Malicious damage with a crime reference number (*within 7 days*)
- Domestic abuse, harassment or hate crime
- Forced entry for welfare concerns
- Repeat repairs linked to disability or impairment
- Reasonable wear and tear

Costs and payment

- Full repair cost
- Estimate provided where possible
- Payment options available
- Debts may affect transfers, exchanges or Right to Buy
- We will always explain the reason for any recharge before invoicing

All recharge decisions are made fairly and proportionately in line with **Housing Ombudsman guidance**. Tenants may request a review.

Who is responsible for repairs?

Tenant responsibility	Notes and exceptions
Bayonet fixings for cookers	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; must use Gas Safe registered engineer
Chimney sweeping	<i>Tenant responsibility</i>
Cooker point	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; bayonet fitting and hose
Doors (internal/external)	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; when damaged by tenant or due to carpets fitted
Door bell	<i>Tenant responsibility</i>
Door lock changes	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; unless valid crime reference
Drains	<i>Council responsibility</i> ; unless blocked by misuse (food, fat, wipes, etc)
Drives	<i>Tenant responsibility</i>
External taps	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; we do not fit or maintain
Fencing	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; unless boundary with open space; Council installs chain-link
Floor coverings	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; vinyl, carpets and or laminates
Fuses	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; expected to replace; recharge if unnecessary call-out
Gates	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; except at change of tenancy
Gardens	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; except communal/sheltered schemes
Gas fire renewal	<i>Council responsibility</i> ; For elderly tenants only
Glazing	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; unless valid crime reference number
Internal door locks	<i>Tenant responsibility</i>
Kitchen appliances	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; tenant-owned appliances not maintained
Light fittings	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; bulbs/starters
Painting (inside)	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; Redecoration after leaks via household insurance
Patio	<i>Council responsibility</i> ; to maintain paths only
Pest control	<i>Environmental Health responsibility</i> ; squirrels/mice only
Shelving	<i>Tenant responsibility</i>
Shower	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; unless installed by Council
Tiling	<i>Tenant responsibility</i>
Toilet seats	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; unless exceptional circumstances
TV aerials	<i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; non-communal only
Washing lines	<i>Tenant responsibility</i>
Washing machine fittings	<i>Council responsibility</i> ; repairs up to waste pipe; <i>Tenant responsibility</i> ; hoses/connectors

Handy hints

Condensation and mould

Keep kitchen/bathroom doors closed when cooking/bathing

Ventilate rooms daily; use extractor fans

Running taps and showers after time away

Wipe condensation from windows and sills

Leave gaps behind furniture

Dry clothes outdoors or in ventilated rooms

Maintain steady heating in cold months

Use fungicidal wash (*free kits available*) – do not use bleach

Damp and mould policy - if you are unsure what to do, please refer to the Council's Damp and Mould Policy for further guidance. You can find this on the Council's website by selecting Housing → Council tenants → Mould and damp, or you can request a copy from the Customer Services team.

These issues are assessed under the: **Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)**

Report concerns promptly!



Complaints and feedback

We aim to provide a high-quality service. If you are unhappy, you can complain.

How to complain

Online: [stalbans.gov.uk/complaints](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/complaints)

Email: complaints@stalbans.gov.uk

Phone: 01727 819300

Post: **Customer Services, St Albans City & District Council, St Peter's Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3JE**

Process

Stage 1: Acknowledge in 5 working days, respond in 10

Stage 2: Review within 20 working days

If still unsatisfied: Contact the Housing Ombudsman:
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk | 0300 111 3000

If you need adjustments (e.g. large print, advocate, interpreter), please tell us. We will make reasonable adjustments in line with the **Equality Act 2010**.

Contact and accessibility

Repairs service

**St Albans City & District Council, St Peter's Street,
St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3JE**

Phone: 01727 819256

Email (Repairs): stalbansrepairs@morgansindall.com

Email (Heating/Gas): gasandheatingrepairs@stalbans.gov.uk

Online: [stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans](https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans)

Accessibility

We are committed to the **Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)**. This information can be provided in large print, Braille, audio or other languages on request. Easy Read versions available on request. Call 01727 819494.

Our approved contractors

We work with trusted specialist contractors to deliver high-quality repairs and maintenance:

<u>Service area</u>	<u>Contractor</u>
General repairs:	Morgan Sindall Property Services
Gas and heating:	Quality Heating Services
Water hygiene:	Watret
Aerial systems:	SCCI
Passenger lifts and stairlifts:	Stannah
Communal entry doors:	Masco



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