

customer home improvements guide

April 2023

customer home improvements guide

at believe housing, we know the importance of customers feeling at home in their property.

As such, we will assess and support customers to make improvements that encourage them to take pride in their home and neighbourhood.

Integral to this is that we consider all improvement requests in line with their tenancy agreement, relevant legal and regulatory requirements, best practice, and the values and aims of believe housing.

If you are unsure about your improvement, or you are concerned about any safety issues, then please contact us.

The information provided in this procedure, alongside the associated Customer Home Improvement Policy, must be adhered to alongside any other related believe housing policy and tenancy agreement. Customers who undertake unauthorised alterations to their property may be required to reinstate the property to its original condition. Failure to do so may result in us arranging for the works to be undertaken to reinstate, make safe or rectifying any damage and the customer may be recharged the costs.

You can view the [Customer Home Improvement Policy](#) on our website.

And you can find out more on our website about [safety in your home](#).

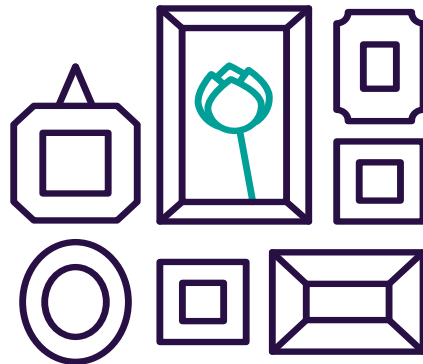
pre-approved improvements

These do not require approval from believe housing.

Please read the Customer Home Improvement Policy for full terms and conditions, before carrying out any work.

We will make sure all relevant asbestos information is available to enable customers and their contractors to safely carry out the work. This information is available on request through the customer portal, by email or telephone.

- Please be mindful of textured/artexed coatings that could contain asbestos materials. These must not be covered, damaged or removed.
- The tenant must agree that the improvement remains in situ should the tenancy be terminated, unless we agree or insist upon its removal, which will be stated in the termination of the tenancy.
- believe housing accepts no liability for any loss or damage incurred.
- The tenant must keep any new fittings clean and serviceable.



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Bathroom	Glass shower screens	Safety glass only, that is fit for purpose and installed to a high standard.
Decorating and fixings	Bathroom and kitchen tiles	Please be mindful of textured/artexed coatings that could contain asbestos materials. These must not be covered, damaged or removed. If unsure, request documents from believe housing.
Decorating and fixings	Painting internal walls	Please be mindful of textured/artexed coatings that could contain asbestos materials. These must not be covered, damaged or removed. If unsure, request documents from believe housing.
Decorating and fixings	Skirting/dado/picture rails	Please be mindful of textured/artexed coatings that could contain asbestos materials. These must not be covered, damaged or removed. If unsure, request documents from believe housing.
Decorating and fixings	Putting up mirrors/shelving	Please be mindful of textured/artexed coatings that could contain asbestos materials. These must not be covered, damaged or removed. If unsure, request documents from believe housing.
Decorating and fixings	TV brackets	Please be mindful of textured/artexed coatings that could contain asbestos materials. These must not be covered, damaged or removed. If unsure, request documents from believe housing.
Doors	Painting internal doors (not fire doors)	White gloss only. Fire doors must not be altered in any way, as it will affect the integrity of your fire door. Please refer to your Customer Home Improvement Policy and, if you are unsure, contact believe housing.
Doors	Replacing solid internal doors (with no glass panels or ventilation)	Permission must be sought before changing any glass-panelled doors, as a minor improvement, to allow us to check once work is complete.
Doors	Door knockers, numbers or any other fixing.	Adhesive only, no screws or damage to the door in any way.
Fencing, gates, boundaries	Painting fencing	Paint, stains, oils or varnishes must be fit for purpose and suitable for outdoor fencing. Only neutral browns or greys are permitted.

Flooring	Replace flooring (not first floor or above dwellings)	You can add laminate flooring, floor tiles or replace carpet in your home. believe housing will not be responsible for the cost or replacement of the flooring or floor tiles if they have to be lifted for repairs or upgrading of the home. (Permission for laminate, floor tiles or hard flooring is not allowed in first floor or above dwellings, which must remain as carpets due to noise disturbance)
Key safes	Key safes	Must not be installed on properties with external wall insulation.
Smart meters	Smart meters	Please contact your energy supplier.

minor improvement requests

If the proposed works are classed as minor improvements, please apply using the customer portal, email or telephone. We will provide a list of our requirements to complete the works and our written permission. We do not charge for advising and assessing requests for minor home improvements, but you must have permission before starting on any improvements.

minor improvement requests		
CCTV , video doorbells and security	CCTV and video doorbells (within property boundary and not communal blocks)	You will need our permission to establish positioning, electrical requirements and fittings.
CCTV , video doorbells and security	Security alarm	Please speak to us about your concerns and we will assist you with requirements and whether your request is viable. Please note believe housing does not install or supply these, this would be at your own cost.
Doors	External door replacement	If your door is damaged, please contact the Property Repairs Team first. You must provide details of your FENSA approved fitter with product specifications.
Doors	Replacing internal doors with glass panels or ventilation	We will only allow glass panels to internal doors that are marked with safety glass kite mark. Fire doors cannot be removed or replaced under any circumstances.
Driveways	Driveway renewal or re-lay	You will need to apply with your proposed changes so we can advise on requirements including drainage.
Electrical	Electric car charging point	As part of believe housing’s environmental pledge, we will engage with customers and encourage positive behaviour change to help lessen climate impact. We will support your application to see if it is viable. These improvements will be at your expense.

Electrical	Solar panels	As part of believe housing’s environmental pledge, we will engage with customers and encourage positive behaviour change to help lessen climate impact. We will support your application to see if it is viable. These improvements will be at your expense.
Electrical	Sky dish	You will need our permission to establish positioning, electrical requirements and fittings.
Electrical	TV aerial	You will need our permission to establish positioning, electrical requirements and fittings.
Electrical	New light fittings and sockets	Any electrical alteration must not overload the circuit and must come with minor works or ECIR certification and meet current NICEIC regulations. All electrical work must be carried out by a regulated electrician and their details supplied to believe housing, prior to permission being granted.
Electrical	Electric fire install - stone fire surrounds not allowed	It’s unlikely you will need a new source of heat installed into your property but please apply for this minor alteration with as much detail, install and reasoning as possible for us to be able to consider your application. Stone fire surrounds not allowed.
Fencing, gates, boundaries	Fencing - replacement of panels	If your fencing has been damaged by weather conditions or other reasons beyond your control, please contact the Property Repairs Team in the first instance. Please submit product information, tradesperson details and any photos with your application.
Fencing, gates, boundaries	New garden gate	Please apply for this minor alteration so we can check specifications with you. Please submit product information, trades person details and any photos with your application.
Garden	Artificial grass	Generally, we discourage artificial grass due to its environmental impact. However, we understand that not everyone can care for their lawn. Please contact your neighbourhood officer to see if there’s some assistance we can provide in the first instance, before applying for a minor improvement.
Garden	Boundary trees and shrubbery	You will need our permission to remove any trees or shrubbery that are located on the boundary of the property.
Kitchen	Addition of dishwasher	Please supply photos, details and measurements so we can check your kitchen layout and drainage. You will need our permission before you amend the kitchen layout, which was installed in line with Decent Homes Standard and (HHSRS) Housing Health Safety Rating System.

<p>Outdoor structures (such as sheds)</p>	<p>Small shed/playhouse/summerhouse</p>	<p>Tenants are advised to consult their neighbours when planning to erect external structures. believe housing allows temporary structures (sheds) within the garden boundary that do not exceed 2m x 3m and must not exceed a max height of 2.5m. All glazing will need to be either polycarbonate or safety glass. Maintenance or access of the property must not be compromised; for example, drainage inspection chambers, rodding eyes, stop taps are not covered over. No structures are to be erected within 2m of the property and 1m of boundary. Glass greenhouses are not permitted. The shed cannot be located in front of your house. Please note that planning permission is likely to be needed if the total floor area of the shed exceeds 15m², the height of the eaves exceeds 2.5m and will be considered a major improvement.</p>
<p>Plumbing</p>	<p>Outside taps</p>	<p>Current regulations state that the tap installed is to be fitted with a double check valve (non-return valve) and an isolation valve internally to the supply pipe. believe housing does not allow plastic pipework; copper pipework must be used.</p>
<p>Water meter</p>	<p>Water meter</p>	<p>Please notify believe housing so we can grant you written permission, as you may need this letter when you contact Northumbrian Water.</p>

major improvements

Major improvements require believe housing to assess requests to ensure that works are carried out safely and will not cause issues to the structure of the building, legal boundary issues, or nuisance to neighbours. Many major improvements will require a review of supporting documents, planning applications and site visits. Before applying, please make sure you have any planning permissions, drawings, material and dimension information, contractor details, and photos to support your application.

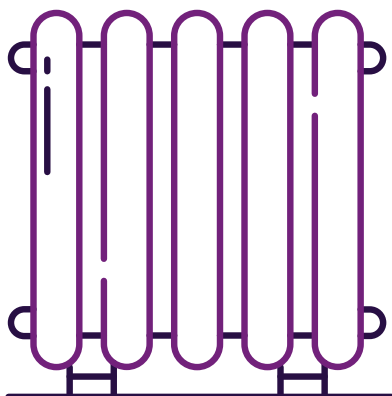
For guidance on planning required, visit www.planningportal.co.uk

Major improvements incur a £50 + VAT processing fee as stated in the associated policy statement.

<p>major improvements</p>		
<p>Bathroom</p>	<p>Change bathroom suite</p>	<p>You will need our permission to change your bathroom suite and you will not be granted permission until a detailed bathroom design is submitted with your application. Your design must comply with Decent Homes Standard and (HHSRS) Housing Health Safety Rating System.</p>

<p>Driveways</p>	<p>Installation of off-road parking</p>	<p>You will need to check or apply to your local authority first to complete a pre-planning application form. This application will have a cost you will need to pay. The application will be submitted to the planning team who will look at the area to see if planning permission would be granted or not. Regardless of whether planning is given or approval is not needed by the local authority, you will need to submit your application or request to believe housing for consideration by our building surveyors and advice including site inspections.</p>
<p>Fencing, gates, boundaries</p>	<p>Fencing - new height</p>	<p>You will need to check or apply to your local authority first to complete a pre-planning application form. This application will have a cost you will need to pay. The application will be submitted to the planning team who will look at the area to see if planning permission would be granted or not. Regardless of whether planning is given or approval is not needed by the local authority, you will need to submit your application or request to believe housing for consideration by our building surveyors and advice including site inspections.</p>
<p>Fencing, gates, boundaries</p>	<p>Fencing - insert new fence on boundary</p>	<p>You will need to check or apply to your local authority first to complete a preplanning application form. This application will have a cost you will need to pay. The application will be submitted to the planning team who will look at the area to see if planning permission would be granted or not. Regardless of whether planning is given or approval is not needed by the local authority, you will need to submit your application or request to believe housing for consideration by our building surveyors and advice including site inspections.</p>
<p>Garden</p>	<p>Garden patio</p>	<p>You may be required to obtain planning permission from your local authority for a patio depending on size and location. It is your responsibility to obtain this permission and cover the cost. We will detail specific conditions around your request such as drainage, access to manholes and gulleys. Work should not affect natural drainage or cause flooding to the property.</p>
<p>Kitchen</p>	<p>Kitchen replacement</p>	<p>You will need our permission to change your kitchen and you will not be granted permission until a detailed kitchen design is submitted with your application. Your design must comply with Decent Homes Standard and (HHSRS) Housing Health SafetyRating System.</p>

<p>Outdoor structures (such as sheds)</p>	<p>Large shed/playhouse/summerhouse</p>	<p>Tenants are advised to consult their neighbours when planning to erect external structures. believe housing allows temporary structures that do not exceed 2m x 3m under minor permissions; anything larger will require planning permissions from the local authority and will be classed as a major improvement. Planning advice must be given to believe housing along with all tradesperson, material spec, location information before major improvement can be processed and home inspection arranged with a believe housing surveyor.</p>
<p>Structural and walls</p>	<p>Bathroom - bathroom/toilet knock-through</p>	<p>While most structural alterations are not permitted, believe housing is willing to work with customers if they would like to bring their bathroom up to more modern dimensions and layouts. The costs for the plans and the structural survey are at your own expense, we will not reimburse you. You will be required, at your own expense, to apply to the local authority for planning permission if required and building regulations approval. You will need to inform us of the contractor you are going to use and their insurance details. You need to apply to us with detailed drawings/plans and a structural survey with a detailed report.</p>



prohibited alterations

There are alterations that will not be approved by believe housing and must not be done or added to the property. For full terms, please read the associated Customer Home Improvement Policy. We will not unreasonably withhold permission, but permission may be refused for a number of reasons. Most commonly, we will refuse requests for work that will:

- Devalue the home
- Make a home unsafe
- Reduce the energy efficiency of the home or increase carbon emissions
- Result in additional cost to believe housing
- Cause pest or noise concerns for the home or neighbours
- Alter the integrity of fire doors in any way.

prohibited alteration		
Animal enclosures	Animal enclosures, inclusive of large structured kennels, aviaries, cat exercise enclosures, chicken coops, breeding areas of any sorts.	You must not breed any animals or birds at your home, or build a chicken coop, pigeon housing or aviary. You are not permitted to keep livestock or farm animals.
Bathroom	Alterations to an existing wet room	believe housing does not allow you remove or alter an adapted bathroom. If an adaptation is required for assistance or health purposes, then this will go through aids and adaptation requests. Please contact our Property Repairs Team if there is damage to your wet room.
CCTV, video doorbells and security	CCTV and video doorbells or public areas beyond property boundary and communal areas both inside and outside blocks	believe housing will not under any circumstances grant their consent for CCTV, video doorbells or surveillance devices that cover a communal area of a building or outside space. For example, inside or outside a block of flats. believe housing will not allow CCTV, video doorbells or surveillance devices that do not immediately view an area within the boundary of the property. We have no authority to approve a CCTV/camera doorbell that only views public spaces, as it is not within our jurisdiction; for example, directly viewing a public footpath.
Conservatory	Adding conservatory	believe housing does not allow this type of structural alteration due to planning, drainage, upkeep and value considerations.
Decorating and fixings	Cladding (all including wooden or plastic)	believe housing does not allow internal or external cladding due to fire regulation and compliance checks required.
Decorating and fixings	Painting kitchen units	believe housing will not grant you permission to paint or cover the kitchen units at any time. The kitchen in your home was installed to the Decent Home Standard and has a life cycle of twenty years. If you paint your units or cover them, you may be recharged the cost of a replacement kitchen.

Decorating and fixings	Artex skimming	believe housing does not allow this unnecessary cosmetic work due to health and safety considerations around asbestos-containing materials. If you are concerned about asbestos in your home, please contact believe housing.
Decorating and fixings	Painting external brick/render	believe housing does not allow this unnecessary cosmetic work. Any alteration to existing render can affect its integrity and may void any warranties in place.
Doors	Ramps	Removal of an existing ramp on the property is not allowed under any circumstances. If you require an access ramp, please request through aids and adaptations for advice and processing.
Doors	Internal doors, moving or blocking	believe housing do not allow this type of structural alteration.
Doors	Painting external front, rear or side doors	believe housing does not allow painting of external doors as it can alter the integrity of the door and look unsightly. If your door is damaged, please contact our Property Repairs Team.
Doors	Cat flap	believe housing does not allow cat flaps as these can affect the integrity of the door.
Doors	Installing patio doors	believe housing does not allow this type of structural alteration.
Electrical	Electric fire removal	believe housing does not allow the removal of electric fires. If your electric fire is damaged, please contact our Property Repairs Team.
Electrical	Moving thermostats	believe housing does not allow the movement of thermostats. If you require further advice on our boilers, heating or repairs, please contact our Gas Team.
Extensions	Building extension	believe housing does not allow this type of structural alteration.
Fencing, gates, boundaries	Wall and fence spikes	believe housing does not allow wall or fence spikes due to health and safety considerations.
Garden	Fire pits and chimeneas	believe housing does not allow on health and safety grounds.

Garden	Garden decking	believe housing does not allow garden decking due to the level of drainage, access, upkeep, and pest considerations that may affect you and your neighbours. We do allow patios with the right application process and relevant planning permissions.
Garden	Fixed/installation hot tub	believe housing does not allow installed hot tubs due to structural support, drainage, electrical, and health and safety considerations required.
Garden	Garden ponds	believe housing does not allow garden ponds on health and safety grounds.
Gas	Installation or movement of any gas appliance including fires, range cookers and gas meters	believe housing does not allow any alterations, modifications, or installations of gas appliances. If your gas appliance is faulty then please contact our Property Repairs Team immediately.
Gutters and soffits	Replace guttering and soffits	believe housing does not allow cosmetic replacement of soffits and guttering. If you require a repair, then please contact our Property Repairs Team.
Lofts	Use of loft space – including loft ladders, boarding, storage or conversions	believe housing does not allow customers to store anything that is dangerous, flammable or explosive; storage that increases the weight on any part of the property so as to affect the structure or safety of the property; storage that increases the risk of infestation along with other health and safety considerations around insulation, asbestos and boiler flues. Loft ladders are not permitted and boarding of loft space is not permitted. believe housing does not allow loft conversions.
Log burners, oil or solid fuel appliances	Log burners, oil or solid fuel appliances	believe housing does not allow these installations as we consider that the installation of a log burner will make the dwelling less safe for occupiers with high-risk carbon monoxide and fire regulations to take into consideration. If you are concerned about warmth and energy bills, please contact believe housing.
Outdoor structures (such as sheds)	Glass greenhouses	believe housing does not allow glass greenhouses due to health and safety considerations.
Plumbing	Addition, movement or removal of radiators or towel rails	believe housing does not allow the unnecessary addition, movement or removal of radiators and towel rails.
Plumbing	Underfloor heating	believe housing does not allow underfloor heating due to upkeep and repair considerations.

Structural and walls	Removal of chimney breast	believe housing does not allow this type of structural alteration.
Structural and walls	Removal of handrails or spindles to stairs	believe housing does not allow this due to health and safety concerns.
Structural and walls	Removal or movement of internal walls	believe housing does not allow this type of structural alteration.
Windows	Replacing existing windows or altering building structure to facilitate new windows	believe housing does not allow this level of cosmetic structural work. If your windows are damaged, please contact our Property Repairs Team.



believe housing void lettable standard



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