

This guide is for tenants who want to carry out work to their home. If, as a Soha tenant, you would like to carry out work to your home, you must first get our written permission. No work should start until you have our permission. If you don't get our permission in advance, we can ask you to return the property to its original condition. If you don't, we may carry out the work and charge you the cost.

## administration costs

Soha may charge you an admin fee for dealing with a request to carry out an alteration to your home. The fee is calculated on the value of the work.

Works up to the value of £100 – **free**

Works from £101 to £1,000 – **£20**

Works over £1,000 – **£40**

This fee covers the cost of any inspections we need to carry out and letters we send you regarding your alteration.

The fee should be sent in to Soha with your tenant alteration form (sometimes referred to as the green form).

## your right to carry out improvements

As a tenant you have the right to carry out certain work, but conditions apply.

- You must apply for permission by following the Alteration and Improvements to your Home process detailed in this booklet.
- You must comply with current Building Regulations and obtain Planning Consent from your District Council if necessary. Soha will need to see a copy of the Planning Consent, Building Control approval and any correspondence when you apply.
- You should supply Soha with suitable scaled drawings if we ask you for them.
- We may also need to see drawings or correspondence from other parties, such as structural engineers.
- You must comply with the Party Wall Act 1996 (see [www.gov.uk/guidance/party-wall-etc-act-1996-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/party-wall-etc-act-1996-guidance) for more information).
- You must make sure the work does not cause annoyance or nuisance to others and is carried out in a competent manner, using industry standard materials. The work must be carried out by a qualified, competent tradesperson. We give guidance on standards and qualifications later in this leaflet.

- The work must comply with all current Health and Safety legislation (see [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)).

## things you should know before applying to Soha

- If you propose work which needs consent from authorities other than Soha (for example, the District Council for planning permission, or the County Highways department for off-road parking) we recommend you seek approval from them before making your application to Soha.
- Soha may refund you part of the cost of the work if you terminate your tenancy and it qualifies under the Right to Compensation for Improvements (see page 6).
- Soha cannot increase the rent you have to pay as a result of the work while you remain a tenant.
- Fixtures and fittings you install in your Soha home are your responsibility to maintain.
- You may remove the work when you leave the property, but you must make good any damage and reinstate Soha's fixtures and fittings (or equivalent ones) before moving out. If you don't, we will charge you for any making good needed.
- It's your responsibility to apply for any Local Authority grants available for the improvement work you want to carry out.
- Please allow time during your project for Soha to inspect the work. This could be at any stage but we will make an appointment first.
- If the work carried out is not completed to Soha's satisfaction, Soha reserves the right to finish or remove it and recharge the tenant all costs incurred. There's more about what we regard as satisfactory work later in this leaflet.
- If the work you are carrying out is likely to involve the disturbance of any asbestos-containing materials you will be responsible for paying a specialist contractor to carry out an asbestos survey and provide a written report to Soha before permission can be granted.

- If Soha has already had an asbestos survey carried out at your property we will share the results of the survey with you free of charge.

**NOTE:** you will only be required to carry out an asbestos survey if your home was built pre-2000.

- All work must be carried out by a competent tradesman, for example:

**Electrical** - NICEIC accredited

**Gas** - Gas Safe Registered

**Solid fuel** - HETAS accredited

**Asbestos removal** - ARCA approved contractor

## your right to compensation for improvements

If you've had Soha's written permission to carry out work on your home, you may be able to claim compensation at the end of your tenancy. The work must be what is known as 'qualifying work'. These are listed later on.

The compensation is payable at the end of the tenancy. This does not apply to leaseholders or shared owners. If you are a leaseholder or shared owner please contact our legal team.

Compensation is only payable for qualifying works costing over £50. The maximum amount of compensation in any circumstance is £3,000. The final sum is adjusted for depreciation, dependent on the estimated life and condition of the qualifying works when your tenancy comes to an end. We may also adjust the compensation to cover any arrears you owe Soha. The level of compensation will be based on the costs shown on your application form.

You can see the work that qualifies for compensation and how we calculate it over the next two pages. If you don't follow the tenant alteration process detailed later in this booklet, Soha will not pay you compensation when your tenancy ends.

### qualifying improvements      estimated life\*

Bath or shower	10 years
Wash-hand basin	10 years
Toilet	10 years
Kitchen sink	10 years
Storage cupboards in kitchen or bathroom	10 years
Work surfaces for food preparation	10 years
Central Heating	10 years

Thermostatic radiator valves	5 years
Insulation of pipes, water tank or cylinder	10 years
Loft insulation	10 years
Cavity Wall insulation	10 years
Draught proofing to external doors and windows	5 years
Double glazing or other external window	10 years
Replacement or secondary glazing	10 years
Re-wiring or the provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings (inc smoke detectors)	10 years
Any fitting which improves the security of your home, excluding burglar alarms	10 years

\* This means the expected life of a quality product assuming that it has been well maintained.

We specify the materials which should be used in the section called Guidance on Materials and Workmanship on the next page.

Some improvements do not qualify for compensation. These are explained towards the end of the leaflet in the section called Exceptions.

## how do we calculate compensation?

You will only be eligible to make one claim for compensation up to the maximum amount of £3,000 whatever type of work has been completed.

### This is how we calculate it:

$C$  multiplied by  $(1 - Y \text{ divided by } E)$

$C$  = Cost of qualifying work

$Y$  = Number of years since you did the improvement

$E$  = Estimated life of work

### Example

Central heating agreed at a cost of £4,000

Estimated life of 10 years

Tenancy terminated after 5 years

Compensation =  $£3,000 \times (1 - 5/10) = £1,500$

Tenancy terminated after 10 years

Compensation =  $£3,000 \times (1 - 10/10) = \text{Nil}$

Please note that Soha will not pay compensation if you have received a Disabled Facilities Grant from your local authority for the work.

## our promise to you

We will:

- Deal with you in a polite and courteous manner.
- Not unreasonably withhold permission for your work.
- Send you an application form (green form) and guidance notes within three working days of you asking us.
- Provide advice about compensation for the proposed work and respond in writing within four weeks if you ask for compensation.
- Give you a decision within four weeks of receiving your completed application form, assuming you have provided us with all the necessary documentation.
- Ask you for any further supporting documentation we need within four weeks of receiving your application form.
- Arrange an appointment to view the proposed work if necessary.
- Write to you detailing any changes to your original application which we have agreed with you.
- Provide any information we hold about hazardous materials, for example, asbestos on request.
- Write to you if we find the work is unsatisfactory, explaining why and whether your right to compensation is affected.

## guidance on materials and workmanship for specific projects

### bathrooms

- Baths should be made of enamelled steel, be non-slip and have two grip handles.
- Bath panels should be either timber or plastic with easy access to services.
- Basins should be mounted on a pedestal or installed in a suitable vanity unit.
- Toilets and cisterns should be low level suites, cistern must comply with water by-laws.
- Ceiling and wall lights must be waterproof.
- Where showers are fitted, they should have a thermostatic anti-scald device fitted (Soha's preferred range is Mira showers).
- Electric showers should have a pull switch isolation and dedicated power circuit.
- Wall tiling – minimum of two courses to bath and basin surrounds; if a shower is fitted full-height tiling is required in the shower area.
- Isolation valves must be fitted to all sanitary fittings for maintenance purposes.
- Use anti-fungicidal mastic at the junction of tiles and sanitary fittings to form a waterproof seal.

- A suitable low voltage extractor fan must be fitted.
- Electric extract fans or humidistats and override controls should be fitted and must be suitable for installation.

### Hints

1. Check whether Building Control (at the District Council) needs to approve the work.
2. White fittings are less expensive and easier to match if damaged.
3. Floor coverings should be non-slip.
4. Mechanical extractor fans reduce steam and help control condensation.
5. Check water pressure and output rating of showers
6. Check for space on the electrical consumer unit for shower installation connection and ensure the correct rating of RCB is used as well as the correct size of cabling.
7. Soha's preferred sanitary range is Twyford Classic or similar quality.

### satellite dishes

- All dishes must be installed by a competent professional.
- They should not be wider than 45 centimetres across if installed on a chimney or more than 70 centimetres across in other locations.
- If installed on a roof or chimney dishes must not project above the fixing point.
- No more than one dish per house.
- No more than one dish per block of flats without formal planning permission.
- On blocks of flats, dishes must not be installed on roof slopes that front onto the highway.
- All cabling to be clipped at no more than 50cm spacing, concealed where possible.
- Dishes must be removed by residents when they move.

### Hints

1. Check with the District Council if you need planning permission. If you live in a Conservation Area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, this may be the case.
2. If you live in a listed building you will require Listed Building Consent from the council.
3. Select a dish that blends in with the surroundings.
4. Select a discreet installation site.
5. If you live in a new build, there may be planning restrictions or covenants restricting the erection of satellite dishes. Please check with your Neighbourhoods Officer.

## **fencing and sheds**

- Whatever the type of fencing you choose, you must use concrete posts of an appropriate length wherever possible. Any fence posts must be concreted into the ground.
- All timber fences should have a concrete or timber gravel board.
- All timber should be suitably treated.
- Maximum height of a fence is 2 metres — but please check first in case of local restrictions.
- Sheds should not be larger than 2 x 2.3 metres and single storey.
- Sheds should not have electrical supply unless installed by a qualified electrician. If you are planning to do this, please specify on the green form when you apply.
- No sheds will be allowed at sheltered schemes or in communal areas/gardens. It may be possible to apply to Soha for a grant for a shed for communal use.

### *Hints*

1. Fencing over 1 metre high next to a highway may require Planning Permission.
2. Where no fencing exists currently, and you wish to provide fencing, you may need to get planning permission.
3. You may need planning permission for a shed —please check with the local authority first before applying.

## **kitchens**

- Kitchen units must meet BS6222-2:2009 + A1:2017, relating to strength and performance.
- The thickness of the unit carcass of units should be 18mm minimum.
- Units should have adjustable legs.
- Unit hinges should open through 180 degrees.
- Drawers should have metal sides and runners.
- Cooker spaces should be a minimum of 620mm wide.
- Worktops should be 30mm minimum thickness.
- Plumbing services must have isolation valves.
- Wet areas should have non-slip flooring.
- There should be a minimum of two courses of tiles above worktops up to 300mm height (whichever is the greater).
- Wall cupboards should be at least 150mm away from cooker spaces and must not be sited above cooker space.
- Cookers must have stability brackets.
- Gas cookers must be fitted by a Gas Safe registered approved engineer.

- A CP-12 form must be completed and sent to Soha when your gas cooker installation is complete.

### *Hints*

1. Allow 620mm for a standard washing machine space.
2. Allow 620mm for a standard fridge/freezer.
3. Ensure you have enough power points/spurs for all your kitchen appliances (7 points recommended).
4. You should fit a mechanical extractor fan.
5. Bear in mind that tiled worktops are difficult to repair once damaged.
6. Metal-end jointing trims for worktops are easier to install.
7. Tiled cooker spaces are more splash-resistant and easier to clean.
8. Always mastic between worktops and abutting surfaces – for example, tiled splash backs where they meet the worktop.
9. Do not locate cookers behind doors in corners or under windows.
10. You must tell Building Control at your local District Council if you are planning any electrical work.

## **central heating systems**

- The only boilers which Soha will approve are natural gas-fired makes.
- No oil or Calor Gas fired central heating systems will be allowed.
- Soha prefers a condensing boiler - Glow-worm 18 HXI or Glow-worm 30 SXI.
- Combination boiler installations will not be approved.
- We prefer the Ariston 125L pressurised indirect hot water cylinder.
- We prefer non-pressured cylinders.
- We prefer Barlow or Myson round top radiators. They must have thermostatic control valves.
- The heating programmer should be a Danfoss FP 725.
- Thermostats and valves should be Danfoss and pumps should be Grundfoss.
- Works must be carried out by a Gas Safe registered approved gas engineer and an installation certificate (CP-12) provided. You must send Soha the CP-12 when complete
- Soha will need to see the benchmark certificate (guarantee) for all installations.
- The installation must be serviced annually and copies of the gas certificate sent to this office.
- We recommend you use of Sentinal corrosion inhibitor.
- Make good any damage to floorboards.

### *Hints*

1. Ensure your boiler, pipes and radiators are of adequate size.
2. Provide Soha with details of your installation early, so that they can be verified and approved.
3. Please note Soha's preferences (above) and ask for our detailed specification.
4. You may need to install a scale inhibitor. Soha prefers Scale-Master.
5. Do not fit open-flued appliances as they can be dangerous if not serviced correctly.
6. Leave room for ventilation and don't block existing ventilation.
7. Ensure boilers and flues are correctly located.
8. Try to keep pipework to the corners of rooms.
9. Mark your floorboards where pipes run beneath.

### **general building works**

- Materials must match what is there already where possible.
- Cavity wall insulation and roof insulation should be installed to conform with current Building Regulations.
- Gutters and down-pipes should be black uPVC. Fascias and soffits should be white uPVC.
- Where possible, dry verge systems to be used.
- Where flashing is required, please use a minimum of code 4 lead.
- Please use isometric roof tiles.
- Only use pre-treated timbers.

### *Hints*

1. Obtain Planning and Building Regulation approval prior to starting works.
2. Use competent contractors.
3. Use low maintenance products and materials.
4. Use Gas Safe registered engineers for gas works.
5. Use NICEIC electricians.
6. Use HETAS accredited engineer for solid fuel systems.

### **plumbing works**

- All works to comply to current Building Regulations and water by-laws.
- Only compression or soldered fittings should be used in supply services, not plastic push fittings.
- All pipe-work to be adequately insulated and securely clipped.
- Isolation/check valves to be fitted to all appliances.

### *Hints*

1. Keep your runs of pipework simple and easily accessible.
2. Ensure the stop tap is easily-accessible.
3. Check the pipes are the right size.
4. Check water pressure and output.
5. Use a competent plumber.
6. Ensure all pipework and fittings are fully earth-bonded and that you tell your District Council Building Regulations team what you are planning.

### **electrical works**

- Works must comply to current NICEIC regulations.
- New works must have a Residents Current Device.
- All fittings to be to British Standards quality.
- Work must be carried out by an NICEIC accredited electrician.

### *Hints*

1. Keep wiring runs simple.
2. Avoid unusual or difficult-to-obtain light fittings, as it may be difficult to find replacement bulbs.

### **windows and external doors**

- You should use uPVC frames and double-glazed units.
- You should fit window restrictors to windows on the first floor and above. They must limit the opening gap to a maximum of 100mm.
- Casement windows should be fitted with ease-clean/escape/friction hinges.
- Frames and casements should be heat-welded and reinforced.
- Windows must have internal glazing beads.
- Double-glazing units should have a minimum thickness of 24mm.
- Sills should have a minimum 50mm projection.
- Soha prefers Ultima Autolock window handles.
- Doors should be of composite construction.
- Door frames should be reinforced and have a 60–70mm profile.
- Doors should have toughened glass with five-lever mortice lock and night latch, security chain and draught proofing to the letter box and plate.
- All ironmongery to be gold or have an anodised finish.

### stairlifts

- Soha will not object to the installation of a stairlift in a house.
- All future maintenance and servicing will be your responsibility as our tenant. It is also your responsibility to remove the stairlift when you end your tenancy or when the lift is no longer needed. You will also be responsible for making good.
- We will consider a request for a stairlift in communal areas but our decision will be subject to Building and Fire Regulations.

### multi-fuel/wood burners

- Please note that any work to the flue and the installation of a stove/burner requires Building Control consent.
- All new/replacement burners should be installed exactly according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- All installations must have a carbon monoxide alarm fitted.
- All future maintenance and servicing will be your responsibility.
- Work must be undertaken by a HETAS accredited engineer.
- Servicing must be carried out in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. It is the responsibility of the tenant to arrange the servicing.

### exceptions

Works we can't give permission for at all:

- Any works to a new build home during the 12 month warranty period. Your Neighbourhoods Officer can tell you when the warranty period ends on your home. Even then, some works may not be allowed due to planning restrictions. Your Neighbourhood Officer can help you find out if that applies to you.
- Laminate flooring to first floors and above.
- Cat flaps in external doors.
- Tree houses.
- Sheds, greenhouses and scooter stores to sheltered schemes and in communal areas/gardens.

There are some works which are permitted, but won't be eligible for compensation:

- Stairlifts.
- Level access showers.
- Fencing.
- Laminate flooring multi-fuel/wood burners.

- Conservatories.

Please note that installing or replacing a normal television aerial doesn't usually need our permission.

However, please check with your local authority planning department if the aerial is:

- more than two metres above the highest part of the house including the chimney.
- not attached to the property.
- not a single pole.
- requires stays to support it.

### the legal bit ...

Just because we give permission for an alteration or improvement, you still have to carry out the work responsibly, obtaining all the consents that are required.

Soha will not be liable in any way for the work whilst it's being carried out or once it's finished.

You will be responsible for all future maintenance and repairs on the work carried out.

Finally, you will indemnify Soha from any insurance claims resulting from the works.

**By giving permission to the proposed works, Soha does not absolve the tenant from their responsibility and duties to carry out the work in a careful, law abiding way, in accordance with all necessary permissions and regulations.**

**By accepting the conditions to carry out the works the tenant agrees to indemnify and hold harmless Soha Housing against any potential liability arising out of or the work, completed or otherwise.**