Repairs and planned maintenance

How to deal with day-to-day repairs, plan ahead for larger work and keep a record of the condition of the building.

Buildings wear out in predictable ways. Boards that plan for it can spread the cost, and avoid emergency decisions made under pressure. Two systems are needed: one for repairs that cannot wait, and one for the work you can see coming.

Reactive repairs

- **A single route for reports.** Residents should know who to contact, and how, for ordinary and urgent matters.
- **A log.** Record each report: date, location, description, who was told, what was done and when it was closed.
- **Triage.** Decide what is urgent (danger, no water, no power, a leak) and what can be scheduled.
- **Authority to spend.** Agree a limit within which one director or the agent can instruct work without a board meeting.
- **Follow-up.** Confirm that the work has been done, and tell the resident who reported it.

A condition survey

A survey by a suitably qualified surveyor records the state of the roof, structure, services, windows, communal areas, lifts and external works, and gives an estimated life for each. It shows what is likely to need doing, and roughly when.

A planned maintenance programme

From the survey, build a programme that lists each major item, its expected date and its estimated cost. Typical items include external decoration, roof works, lift refurbishment, boiler or pump replacement and carpets. Update it every year, and use it to set the reserve fund contribution.

Larger projects

Work that costs more than the consultation limits can only be recovered in full from leaseholders if the statutory consultation has been followed. Our section 20 guide explains the process. Allow time at the start to specify the work, and appoint someone to supervise it.

Warranties and guarantees

Keep the paperwork for every piece of work: the contract, the invoice, the warranty and any certificate. Check the cover before you pay to fix a defect that is still under guarantee.

Insurance

Report damage that may be an insured loss promptly, before you start repairs, and follow the insurer’s instructions.

> Do not defer necessary work to keep the service charge down. Deferred repairs tend to cost more later, and an unmaintained building can affect sales and mortgages.

Next steps

1. Set up a repairs log.
2. Agree a spending limit for urgent work.
3. Commission or update a condition survey.
4. Build a five- to ten-year maintenance plan.

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