

What are In-house Repairs?

In-house repairs, carried out by a **Direct Labour Organisation (DLO)**, refer to maintenance, servicing, and improvement works on residential properties by a team of tradespeople directly employed by the social housing provider, such as a local council or housing association. This model contrasts with the outsourcing of work to external contractors. The DLO approach is prevalent in the UK's social housing sector for both day-to-day responsive repairs and larger-scale planned maintenance and retrofit programmes. A 2023 study found that 61% of UK social landlords operate a DLO for property repairs and maintenance.

The DLO model is rooted in the principle of bringing greater control and accountability to the repair and maintenance process. By employing their own staff, housing providers can ensure their teams have an intimate knowledge of the specific housing stock they manage, from Victorian-era terraces to post-war council estates. This local knowledge is invaluable for addressing issues specific to a property's construction, such as identifying the cause of persistent dampness or specifying the right materials for a refurbishment.

A key benefit of DLOs is the potential for enhanced quality control. In-house teams are often more closely aligned with the organisation's long-term standards, such as the **Decent Homes Standard** (a measure of quality for social housing in England), or with guidelines for energy-efficiency upgrades like those outlined in **PAS 2035** (the UK standard for whole-house retrofit). For example, a DLO team undertaking a window replacement project in a residential retrofit can ensure the new windows are correctly fitted with **trickle vents** as per the latest requirements of **Approved Document F (2021)** of the Building Regulations, to prevent issues with inadequate ventilation and condensation.

In a real-world scenario, a tenant might report a faulty mechanical extractor fan in their bathroom. A DLO would dispatch their own electrician or ventilation technician to diagnose and repair the fault. The DLO team would be aware of the specific make and model of the fan typically installed in that type of property and would carry the correct parts, leading to a quicker and more efficient repair compared to a generic contractor who might not have the same specialist knowledge. This in-house expertise is particularly crucial when dealing with complex systems, like Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR), where precise balancing and maintenance are essential for optimal performance and to meet **Building Regulations Part F** requirements.