

Living Strong

Program guide to sustaining our remote housing tenancies

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2.1	January 2021	Karen Taylor	Inclusion of new pets policy

List of Attachments

Attachment	Title
A	Communities by TFHC region
B	Suggested Session Plans
C	Tenancy Agreement Fact Sheet
D	Visitor Management Policy Fact Sheet
E	Visitor Management Poster
F	Information for people affected by antisocial behaviour Fact Sheet
G	Budget Worksheet (excel attachment)
H	Paying rent for your house Fact Sheet
I	Paying your rent and bond Poster
J	Debt management Fact Sheet
K	Public housing inspection guide Fact Sheet
L	Recipes for a spotless healthy home Fact Sheet
M	Looking after your home - A guide for remote housing tenants
N	Repairs and maintenance Poster
O	Safer, healthier homes Fact Sheet
P	Repairs and maintenance for your home Fact Sheet
Q	Keeping pets in public housing

Contents

- Living Strong..... 1
- 1. Overview** 4
- 2. Improving our tenancy and property management** 5
- 3. What is Living Strong?** 5
- 4. How will Living Strong support people?**..... 6
- 5. Program Implementation** 6
 - 5.1. Purpose of the Guide..... 6
 - 5.2. Targeting our communities..... 6
 - 5.3. Information currency and access to resources..... 6
- 6. Program Principles** 7
 - 6.1. Expected outcomes..... 7
 - 6.2. Healthy Living Practices..... 8
 - 6.3. Program Material..... 8

1. Overview

The Northern Territory Government's remote housing portfolio is managed by the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (the Department) and is responsible for the provision of safe and secure housing in remote Aboriginal communities, Alice Springs town camps and Tennant Creek community living areas.

The Department delivers a broad range of housing related services under the Northern Territory Government's Remote Housing Investment Program to approximately 5230 remote homes across the Northern Territory.

The Department also receives funding under the National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory Agreement (NPRHNT) 2018-2023, to manage public housing across remote Aboriginal communities, Alice Springs town camps and Tennant Creek community living areas.

Due to the lack of public housing in remote communities, many of these households live in overcrowded dwellings which places the infrastructure under additional pressure due to heavy use resulting in increased repairs and maintenance.

In the new NPRHNT agreement and the associated Implementation Plan, tenancy management support services is one of the key focus areas of the strategic approach to improving public housing conditions in remote Aboriginal communities.

The Department has committed to engaging with residents and stakeholders to integrate a preventative focus to our repairs and maintenance work and build up the evidence base of the program to focus on Health Living Practices (HLPs). For this to be achieved, changes have been made across the remote Property and Tenancy Management (PTM) program. Through the remote PTM program, the Department is responsible for providing a range of tenancy management and property maintenance programs in line with the requirements of the *Residential Tenancy Act (NT)*. This includes education and support for tenants to maintain their tenancies and their homes.

The objectives of the remote PTM are to:

- Maximise the number of suitable houses available to remote Aboriginal communities;
- Improve and maintain the standard of existing houses in remote Aboriginal communities;
- Maintain the amenity of existing houses in remote Aboriginal communities as per the *Residential Tenancy Act* and the Northern Territory public housing standards;
- Provide housing services to tenants in remote Aboriginal communities to a level equivalent to that received by public housing tenants elsewhere in the Northern Territory;
- Increase the number of households in remote Aboriginal communities able to maintain sustainable tenancies; and
- Engage and empower locally based Aboriginal business enterprises in delivering services in remote Aboriginal communities where available.

The Living Strong program is an important part of the Northern Territory Government's \$36.2 million per annum remote Property and Tenancy Management program. Living Strong, has been developed to provide additional tenancy management support services, including basic tenant support to develop knowledge and increase skills to successfully maintain a safe and healthy home and living environment to be delivered by/through community based Community Housing Officers.

The Living Strong program will engage and support tenants to understand their rights and responsibilities of their lease conditions under a Tenancy Agreement, including:

- Understanding their Tenancy Agreement;
- Managing visitors and crowding;
- Responsible pet ownership;
- Managing money and resources; and
- Maintaining a safe, functional and hygienic home.

2. Improving our tenancy and property management

The Department has established the *Healthy Homes* program to guide the investment into new housing approaches that promote the Healthy Living Practices (HLPs) across our 73 remote communities and selected town camps. HLPs have already been integrated into *Our Community, Our Future, Our Homes* program through design guidelines for Room to Breathe and HomeBuild NT.

Once houses are constructed or renovated, ongoing repairs and maintenance is critical to support the longevity of the house and tenant wellbeing. A feature of the *Healthy Homes* program is the integration of preventative repairs and maintenance models that focus on and ensure the dwellings health hardware is functioning. This includes the testing and the functionality of safe electricity and water supply, toilets, showers, security, washing areas and food preparation areas. Empowering our tenants to engage in this process is vital to its success.

The remote PTM program is supported through an evidenced based approach to investment into key health hardware across our remote housing. As part of this process, the Department has integrated environmental health and public health information for our tenants, which is being delivered through the Living Strong program and Remote Housing Maintenance Services Contractor.

The changes include, but are not limited to:

- The revision of service model to prioritise the nine (9) Healthy Living Practices (HLPs).
- The development of culturally appropriate materials and resources to support service providers and Departmental staff, including housing inspection checklists.
- The revision of contracts to include HLPs performance measures.
- Increasing the capability of service providers and Departmental staff to implement new PTM approaches.
- The collection of data to inform compliance, service planning and evaluation activities.
- Culturally appropriate methods of communication and information sharing.

3. What is Living Strong?

The Living Strong is an innovative tenancy support program for Aboriginal housing in remote communities. The program will work with tenants to identify where they need support to improve their life skills, increase their ability to manage their household and ancillary property independently and support better tenancy results as part of the remote PTM program. The program provides early engagement and support for tenants to build life skills and maintain their household. It focuses on enabling people to develop up practical living skills and better

coordinated property maintenance with an understanding that looking after your house and yard is an important part of looking after your family's health.

An initiative of the Department, the Living Strong program will be delivered in partnership with Regional Councils, Aboriginal Business Enterprises and Aboriginal controlled housing organisations.

4. How will Living Strong support people?

Living Strong will enhance the previous tenancy support program delivered by funded service providers and will commence from 1 July 2021 or sooner, where applicable. The program has been developed through consultation with stakeholders, including current tenants, service providers and government agencies. The strong feedback was the need to establish a tenancy support program focusing on the core living skills for tenants.

The program will aim to:

- increase knowledge and capacity of tenants to meet their tenancy obligations and responsibilities;
- improve sustainability of tenancies by supporting tenants to develop the knowledge and skills to successfully maintain a safe and healthy home and living environment;
- reduce repairs and maintenance costs and increased life of housing infrastructure; and
- improve environmental health outcomes for households in line with the nine HLPs.

5. Program Implementation

5.1. Purpose of the Guide

This guide has been prepared to provide tenancy management support service providers with information to deliver Living Strong tenancy education and support to public housing tenants in remote communities, town camps and community living areas.

5.2. Targeting our communities

In planning delivery of Living Strong, it is recommended that service providers consider community and individual needs and, where appropriate, tailor the material content and/or approach to suit.

Living Strong is part of a range of early and ongoing supports for tenants and is complemented by the work of Housing Maintenance Services Contractors and Departmental staff.

Service providers are required to deliver Living Strong in line with the terms of the Tenancy Support Services Contract and will be supported by regional Departmental staff.

For further information on the leased and other tenure related communities, please refer to **Attachment A**.

5.3. Information currency and access to resources

The Departmental policies and suggested resources provided with this guide are current as at November 2020. As policies and associated information are reviewed and or subject to change, it is recommended that service providers work closely with the Department to ensure the information is current.

Information relating to Departmental policies is available from <https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/publications-and-policies/housing>.

6. Program Principles

Living Strong program principles include:

- the use of culturally appropriate strategies and principles that promote members of households voluntarily adopting healthy living practices;
- that any activities at household level are based on assessed needs of individual households;
- that all responsible household members participate in program activities to promote a shared understanding and responsibility;
- the use of action learning methods, including the use of practical demonstrations; and
- that any material and information provided to tenants should be in plain English and be delivered in a manner that is culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community in which it is being delivered.

6.1. Expected outcomes

Tenants will have the knowledge, skills and resources to successfully maintain their tenancy, including maintaining a safe, healthy home and living environment.

Tenants will:

1. Know and understand what a Tenancy Agreement is and their rights and responsibilities under the Agreement.
2. Understand and apply the rules about visitors, including but not limited to knowing:
 - a. their rights to have visitors;
 - b. how many visitors are allowed and for how long visitors can stay;
 - c. that visitors are subject to tenancy rules;
 - d. that visitors are required to respect the rights of neighbours; and
 - e. how to deal with unwanted visitors.
3. Understand the need to:
 - a. Keep track of their money;
 - b. Make priorities about spending their money; and
 - c. Plan ahead and make a budget.
4. Have the knowledge and skills to:
 - a. Promote safety in the home and avoid hazardous behaviours and situations, including but not limited to:
 - i. dealing with household chemicals and dangerous materials;
 - ii. reporting electrical faults or water leaks; and
 - iii. Identify safety risks in the home, such as power points, cords and chargers.
 - b. Undertake living practices so as to:
 - i. maintain good domestic and environmental hygiene;
 - ii. protect the health and safety of all members of the household;
 - iii. improve household nutrition through safely storing food and the safe preparation and cooking of food;

- iv. identify and report damage or repairs; and
 - v. maintain safe ways to use household amenities (what not to flush down the toilet and why, don't remove taps/showers heads, don't remove door handles and windows, don't break power points).
- c. Safely and confidently:
- i. keep the yard neat and tidy and free of rubbish and garden waste;
 - ii. reduce disease causing agents inside the home and in the yard, such as pests (like cockroaches, ants and rats) dust, waste (including waste water) and dangerous materials; and
 - iii. undertake basic maintenance tasks such as changing light bulbs, tap washers etc.

6.2. Healthy Living Practices

The Healthy Living Practices (HLPs) link the health hardware of the household with what happens in the home. There is a focus on nine HLPs which are:

1. Washing people;
2. Washing clothes and bedding;
3. Removing wastewater safely;
4. Improving nutrition;
5. Reducing the impact of crowding;
6. Reducing the impact of animals, insects and vermin;
7. Reducing the impact of dust;
8. Improved temperature control; and
9. Reducing minor trauma¹.

6.3. Program Material

Material for the Living Strong program is provided in three parts:

1. Suggested Session Plans (six) (Attachment B);
2. Fact sheets and guides (including online resources) collated for each Tenancy Information Pack; and
3. Money manager and budget planning tools (Excel spreadsheets).

Suggested resources are samples of materials, some of which are used in urban and remote locations. It is the responsibility of the Service Provider to ensure that it is delivered in a manner that is culturally and linguistically appropriate to the community in which it is being delivered.

Suggested concept materials:

Renting in community in various languages (NT)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7ebY-LcWG4TDNJkklWJ4-DuLOqB57UgH>

Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) resource – 'Looking after your house'

<https://www.rhdaustralia.org.au/resources/keeping-your-house-clean-flipchart>

WA Based model – Deadly tenants, Deadly Homes in English and language

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTaknl3NG-Jm_2JypWav6RvRbhjbxzGUo

¹ Health Habitat, The Health Story, accessed <http://www.housingforhealth.com/about/the-health-story/>

Communities by region

Darwin (Arafura Region) Phone: 8995 5122	Nhulunbuy (Arnhem Region) Phone: 8987 0533	Katherine (Big Rivers Region) Phone: 8973 8513
Belyuen Gunbalanya Maningrida Milikapiti Minjilang Nama Outstation Nauiyu Nganmarriyanga (Palumpa) Peppimenarti Pirlangimpi Wadeye Warruwi Wudapuli Outstation Wurrumiyanga (Nguui)	Angurugu Galiwin'ku Gapuwiyak Gunyangara Milingimbi Milyakburra Ramingining Umbakumba Yirrkala	Amanbidji Barunga Beswick Binjari Bulla Bulman Daguragu Eva Valley (Manyalluk) Jilkminggan Lajamanu Kalkarindji Kybrook Farm Minyerri Ngukurr Numbulwar Pigeon Hole Rittarangu Robinson River Weemol Yarralin
Tennant Creek (Barkly Region) Phone: 8962 4497	Alice Springs (Central Australia Region) Phone: 8951 5344	
Ali Curung Alpururulam Ampilatwatja Canteen Creek Imangara Tara Tennant Creek Community Living Areas Wutunugurra	Alice Springs Town Camps Amoonguna Areyonga Atitjere Engawala Finke Haasts Bluff Imanpa Kaltukatjara Kintore Laramba Mount Liebig Mutitjulu Ntaria (Hermannsburg) Nturiya Nyirripi Papunya Pmara Jutunta Santa Teresa Titjikala Wallace Rockhole Willowra Wilora Yuelamu Yuendumu	

Session 1 – Tenancy Agreements, Pets, Managing Visitors and Managing Money

Learning outcomes	Suggested Resources
<p>Tenants understand that a Tenancy Agreement is a legal document and that different parts of the Agreement set out different rights and responsibilities for both the tenant and the person or organisation that owns the house (the landlord).</p> <p>By signing a Tenancy Agreement it means that you agree to do the things within the agreement like looking after your house, paying bond and rent and making sure your visitors follow the rules.</p> <p>Tenants understand that Department staff and interpreters are available to assist.</p>	<p>Fact Sheet – Tenancy Agreement (Attachment C) Tenancy Information Pack Audio – videos in relevant languages</p> <p>Housing Authority WA-Deadly Tenants, Deadly Homes – Rights and Responsibilities https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTFjOHvMox8&list=PLTaknl3NG-Jm_2JypWav6RvRbhjbxzGUo&index=15</p>
<p>Territory Families, Housing and Communities recognises the benefits to families and individuals by keeping animals as pets.</p> <p>This includes the importance of assistance animals to persons with disabilities.</p> <p>As a pet owner there a number of responsibilities you need to know to keep your pet healthy.</p> <p>All animals must be kept in a manner that ensures the ongoing welfare and safety of the animal.</p> <p>To safely keep your pet at the premises you may have to make changes to the premises. The CEO (Housing) must approve any changes to the premises before you start any work and you will need to pay for the changes.</p>	<p>Fact Sheet – Keeping pets in public housing (Attachment Q) Audio – videos in relevant languages</p>
<p>Tenants can have visitors.</p> <p>Understanding how long visitors can stay. The requirement is to advise the Department if longer than 14 days.</p> <p>Visitors have to follow the same rules as tenants.</p> <p>Tenants are responsible for making sure visitors follow the rules.</p> <p>The Department can help if tenants are having trouble with visitors.</p>	<p>Visitor Management Policy and Poster (Attachments D and E) Fact Sheet – Information for people affected by antisocial behaviour (Attachment F) NT Government advertisement (YouTube video) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThSShTU7VLA Audio – videos in relevant languages NT Government Website -Visitors in Public Housing https://nt.gov.au/property/public-housing/tenants-your-rights-and-responsibilities/visitors-in-public-housing</p>
<p>Tenants need to advise the Department within 28 days if the people living in the house changes – when someone moves in or out of the house.</p>	<p>https://nt.gov.au/property/public-housing/tenants-your-rights-and-responsibilities/visitors-in-public-housing</p>

Learning outcomes	Suggested Resources
<p>Money is needed for a range of essential items, including rent and food, as well as extras, like phones.</p> <p>Understanding what are essential items (priorities) and what are 'extra or nice to have' items.</p> <p>Discuss the types of things that money is needed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent and bond • Food • Power • Transport • School • Shampoo/Conditioner • Cleaning products • White goods (fridge, washing machine) and furniture • Clothes • Old debts/loans • Phones • TV/DVD • Entertainment • Medicine 	<p>Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) Money Smart website – www.moneySMART.gov.au Budget planner. The planner helps to work out where your money is going.</p> <p>Audio – videos in relevant languages</p> <p>Money management program</p>
<p>It is important to plan ahead to manage your money.</p> <p>What is a budget?</p> <p>Household costs to be shared between everyone living in the house.</p>	<p>Budget Worksheet (Attachment G)</p> <p>Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) Money Smart website – www.moneySMART.gov.au</p> <p>Audio – videos in relevant languages</p> <p>Financial literacy program – check with IBA or local orgs</p>
<p>You are required to pay a Bond – what is a bond, what happens to it while you are living in the house and when you move out.</p> <p>How often rent needs to be paid.</p> <p>What to do if you are having trouble paying rent.</p> <p>Rent is used by the Department to help look after remote houses.</p>	<p>Fact Sheet – Paying rent for your house (Attachment H)</p> <p>Paying your rent and bond poster (Attachment I)</p> <p>Fact Sheet – Debt management (Attachment J)</p> <p>Audio – videos in relevant languages</p> <p>https://nt.gov.au/property/public-housing/paying-your-rent-in-public-housing/introduction</p>

Session 2 – Looking after your house focusing (HLPs)

Learning outcomes	Suggested Resources
<p>Looking after your house is an important part of looking after your family's health. Different areas of the house that need to be cleaned and how often:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchen (see Session 3) • Laundry, bathroom and toilet (see Session 4) • Floors • Walls • Windows and louvres • Fans • Light switches and power points 	<p>Fact Sheet – Public housing inspection guide (Attachment K) Audio – videos in relevant languages Practical demonstration</p> <p>https://nt.gov.au/property/public-housing/looking-after-your-home/look-after-your-public-housing-home</p> <p>Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) resource – ‘Looking after your house’ https://www.rhdaustralia.org.au/resources/keeping-your-house-clean-flipchart</p> <p>Housing Authority WA-Deadly Tenants, Deadly Homes https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dFRuNhsp_o&list=PLTaknl3NG-Jm_2JypWav6RvRbhjbxzGUo&index=17</p>
<p>Most cleaning can be done with white vinegar and bi-carb soda which are cheap to buy and safe to use.</p> <p>Cleaning cloths – use one cleaning cloth in the kitchen, a different one in the bathroom and a different one on the floor and walls so you don't spread germs. Using different coloured cloths will help people remember where each cloth can be used.</p> <p>Cleaning products can be poisonous and can make people very sick. Store in safe and secure place so that young children cannot get to them.</p>	<p>Fact sheet – Recipes for a spotless healthy home (Attachment L) Practical demonstration Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) resource – ‘Looking after your house’ https://www.rhdaustralia.org.au/resources/keeping-your-house-clean-flipchart</p> <p>Ask local store to stock vinegar and bi-carb soda, eucalyptus and tea tree oil, spray bottles and labels (and any other cleaning material referred to in the session).</p> <p>Audio – videos in relevant languages</p>

Session 3 – Looking after your kitchen (HLPs)

Learning outcomes	Suggested Resources
<p>Different areas of the kitchen that need to be cleaned and how often:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benches • Cupboards • Stove and oven • Sink • Fridge 	<p>Looking after your home guide (Attachment M)</p> <p>Practical demonstration</p> <p>Audio – videos in relevant languages</p> <p>https://nt.gov.au/property/public-housing/looking-after-your-home/look-after-your-public-housing-home</p> <p>Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) resource – ‘Looking after your house’</p> <p>https://www.rhdaustralia.org.au/resources/keeping-your-house-clean-flipchart</p>
<p>The kitchen needs to be kept clean, particularly after a meal is prepared. Food in cupboards should be kept in closed containers or sealed bags.</p>	<p>Cleaning material</p> <p>House or class room with kitchen facility with practical demonstration.</p> <p>Food for lunch.</p>

Session 4 – Looking after your laundry, bathroom and toilet (HLPs)

Learning outcomes	Suggested Resources
<p>Different areas of the laundry, bathroom and toilet that need to be cleaned and how often:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benches and cupboards • Basins and tubs • Shower and bath • Washing machine • Floors • Toilet • Drains to be kept clear 	<p>Looking after your home guide (Attachment M)</p> <p>Practical demonstration</p> <p>Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) resource – ‘Looking after your house’ https://www.rhdaustralia.org.au/resources/keeping-your-house-clean-flipchart</p>
<p>The laundry needs to be kept clean, particularly to make sure water can drain away.</p>	<p>Cleaning material.</p> <p>Practical demonstration</p>
<p>The bathroom and toilet need to be kept clean to help stop mould growing and germs from spreading.</p> <p>Reminder – to use different cleaning cloths for different areas of the house to stop germs spreading.</p> <p>Toilet How to clean toilets</p> <p>What not to flush</p> <p>Hoses must not be used to clean the inside of the house because they cause damage to power points, floors, tiles and walls.</p> <p>Keep drains clear.</p>	<p>Cleaning material.</p> <p>Practical demonstration</p>

Session 5 – Looking after your yard and pest control (HLPs)

Learning outcomes	Suggested Resources
<p>Looking after your house includes looking after your yard and pest control.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grass – keep the grass short and mow it regularly. Pull out weeds and put them in the bin. • Only plant bushes, flowers or shrubs that you can take care of and water your garden and plants in the evening. • Make sure garden taps are turned off when not in use and water is not left running for animals. Water for animals should be left in shallow dishes. • Keep plants, timber or firewood two metres from the house to help stop white ant damage. • Keep your yard free of rubbish and put the bin out on ‘bin day’ so it can be emptied. • Make sure people don’t swing on the clothes line or hang anything heavy on it. • Make sure people don’t climb or cut holes in the fences. 	<p>Practical demonstration</p> <p>Mower</p> <p>Gardening tool and personal protective equipment</p> <p>Audio – videos in relevant languages</p> <p>Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) resource – ‘Looking after your house’ https://www.rhdaustralia.org.au/resources/keeping-your-house-clean-flipchart</p> <p>Housing Authority WA-Deadly Tenants, Deadly Homes –Everyone cleans up house and yard https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTakn3NG-Jm_2JypWav6RvRbhjbxzGUo</p>
<p>Under your Tenancy Agreement you need to advise the Department if you notice termites or ginger ants that might damage your house or if you are having trouble with too many bugs and pests as your house may need to be sprayed/treated.</p> <p>Tips for controlling pests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep food in cupboards in plastic boxes with lids or plastic bags • Don’t keep, eat or cook food in the bedrooms • Keep cats, dogs and other pets outside of the house. You can use tick and flea collars and washes to kill ticks and fleas. • Use cockroach baits or bombs before the problem gets too big (keep away from children). Tea tree or eucalyptus oil can also help keep bugs away. • Put rubbish in the bin and make sure bins are cleaned and emptied regularly (at least weekly). This will keep flies and maggots out of bins. • Keep doors closed and make sure fly screens do not have holes. Call Housing on 1800 104 076 or talk to your local Housing staff to report pests. 	<p>Audio – videos in relevant languages</p>

Session 6 – Preventative Repairs and Maintenance (HLPs)

Learning outcomes	Suggested Resources
<p>Tenants are responsible for looking after their home and keeping it in good working order.</p> <p>Cleaning your home and yard will help keep your home in good working order.</p> <p>You can also look after your home by undertaking basic repairs and maintenance (identify what these are) and reporting any problems to Housing.</p> <p>Not having damage repaired can lead to bigger problems.</p>	<p>Repairs and maintenance poster (Attachment N)</p> <p>Audio – videos in relevant languages</p> <p>Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) resource – ‘Looking after your house’ https://www.rhdaustralia.org.au/resources/keeping-your-house-clean-flipchart</p>
<p>Tenants need to let Housing know if their house needs repairs and maintenance.</p> <p>How to let Housing know if something needs to be repaired.</p> <p>Housing will organise for someone to fix damaged or broken items. The amount of time it takes to undertake the repairs will depend on how urgent it is.</p> <p>If damage is deliberate, Housing will fix it to make sure nobody gets hurt but you will have to pay back the cost of repairs.</p> <p>You must not make changes to your house or yard, including adding any new door locks, without asking Housing first.</p> <p>Talk to Housing staff if you want to make any changes to your house or yard.</p>	<p>Fact Sheets</p> <p>Repairs and maintenance poster (Attachment N)</p> <p>Safer, healthier homes (Attachment O)</p> <p>Fact Sheet – Repairs and maintenance for your home (Attachment P)</p> <p>Sticker with the relevant contact details in each home. Sticker to be placed in consistent location in each home; suggested inside power box.</p>
<p>You can also look after your home by undertaking basic repairs and maintenance.</p> <p>Tenants learn how to complete some basic repairs, such as replacing a tap washer to repair a leaking tap and changing a light bulb.</p> <p>Tenants learn how to test a smoke alarm.</p>	<p>On site session</p> <p>Items to undertake repairs, such as light bulbs, tap washers, tools etc.</p> <p>Smoke alarm for testing.</p>