

Handbook for Residential Tenants

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About this handbook

This handbook provides you with information about the repairs service to tenants of Mid Devon District Council. It also tells you what we need to know in order to arrange a repair to your home, what repairs you are expected to do, and how to do some of these yourself.

If you need to have any part of this handbook explained or translated into another language, please contact us. This handbook can also be provided on audio tape, on CD or in large print.

[The book was developed by staff and tenant representatives working together.](#)

Warning - check identity cards!

Before you let anyone into your home to carry out a repair, inspection or gas service, you should check they are who they say they are. All Council staff and any contractors doing work for us must show you their card and give you the job number for your repair. The number should be the same as the one we give on your repair confirmation letter. If you are at all unsure and you want to phone us to check, they are happy to wait outside. See **Contacting us** on page 3. **Remember - when in doubt, keep them out.**

Before you contact us about a repair

- Please look up your repair problem in this book to see what details we need to know. Use the list at the side of each page to find the pages that will help you. By giving us as much information as you can, you can help us get your repair problem fixed quickly.
- Think about when someone can be at home to allow the repair worker in to do the work. A responsible adult must be in the home while the repair is being done.

When you are ready

- Contact us. There are different ways to contact us but we think it is best to phone. See **Contacting us** on page 3.
- Have this book with you when you talk to us and also have a pen and paper ready to write down the job number we give you. You may also need your diary with you so we can agree a day when the repair will be done.
- Let us know about any circumstances we need to take into account when someone comes to your home, for example you may be hard of hearing or have difficulties getting to the door.

Where is it in your home?

- **Mains gas tap**

- **Consumer unit (fusebox)**

- **Mains water stoptap**

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Contacting us

To report a repair

• phone us

- daytime during the week 9am - 5pm (4.30pm on Fridays)
(freephone - except from mobiles) 0800 023 2281
or (standard charge) 01884 233233
- overnight or weekends (emergencies only) 01884 255255

• e-mail usrepairs@middevon.gov.uk

- Please do not use e-mail for emergency or urgent repairs.
- We will acknowledge your e-mail by the end of the next working day.

• visit one of our offices: Market Street, Crediton;

Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton

- open 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 9am to 4.30pm on Fridays
- both offices close at 4pm on the third Wednesday of each month

• write to usRepairs Service, Mid Devon District Council, Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton EX16 6PP

Note: When you write or e-mail, please give your name, address and daytime phone number with full details of your repair problem and what times of day you can be free to allow us to do the work.

Emergencies - what to do

- **Gas (smell, leak or fumes)**

- **Call National Grid (Gas) immediately on 0800 111 999. Use a phone outside your home;** using one inside, even a mobile, could spark an explosion.
- Turn off the gas and open the windows. Turn the handle at the meter to the flat (horizontal) position.
- Do not smoke and put out any flames (matches and so on).
- Don't switch anything electrical on or off until the problem is fixed.

- **Smoke or fumes or your smoke detector alarm sounds**

- **If you can smell or see smoke call 999 or 112 immediately.**
- If there is no sign of smoke or fire, check whether the alarm has been set off by something else. See **Handy hints** on page 57.

- **Electricity.** Turn the mains switch on the consumer unit to OFF. If you have a power cut call the emergency number on your latest electricity bill.

- **Water.** Turn the mains stop tap to the right (clockwise). If you have no water supply, phone South West Water on **0800 169 1144**.

- **Criminal damage**

- Report it to the Police **08452 777 444**
- Also, if you know who did the damage, report the problem to the Housing Anti-social Behaviour Team **01884 234287**.
- You do not have to give your name to the Police or the Anti-social Behaviour Team.

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Reporting repairs

1. When you call, let us know:

- your name, address and daytime phone number
- details of what needs repairing
- when you will be at home
- any circumstances we need to take into account, such as you are hard of hearing or will take time getting to your door.

2. We will assess the repair

- We will check whether the repair is our responsibility.
- We will tell you how quickly we will deal with the repair.
- If necessary, we will arrange for a member of staff to visit your home to look at what needs to be done.

3. We will arrange the repair

- For most repairs except emergencies we will make a morning (8am to 1pm) or afternoon (1pm to 4.30pm) appointment for a specific date.

4. We will confirm the repair

If you contact us by phone we will give you a job number which you can give us if you need to contact us again about the repair. For all repairs except emergencies we will send you a letter which will confirm:

- details of the work we will do
- the job number
- the target date by which the repair should be finished
- details of any appointment we have agreed with you.

When you report a repair

- Please do not make your repair problem sound more urgent than it is in order to get a quicker (emergency) response. If you do, we may charge you for the emergency call-out.
- We may need to visit your home before ordering any repairs so we can assess exactly what work is needed.
- Our repair workers' normal working hours are 8am to 1pm (mornings) and 1pm to 4.30pm (afternoons except Fridays). At weekends, on public holidays and after 5pm on weekdays we only send out a repair worker if it is an emergency.

When work is going to be done in your home

- We will tell you if you need to move or protect any furniture, or if you need to lift any floor covering (carpets, laminate). You should do this before the repair worker arrives, but let us know if you are having difficulties arranging this.
- Repair workers need you to be in the home while they work. They may need to discuss with you any problems that arise. We insist that they must not work in homes where the only person(s) at home is under 16 years old.
- Please make sure that repair workers can get on with their work safely. Keep pets out of the way and your children under control. Repair workers can refuse to work at your home if they feel that their health or safety, or yours, is at risk.
- Please provide a smoke-free environment for our repair workers. They can refuse to work if you are smoking where they are working.
- In very bad weather we will always make things safe but repair workers may not be able to carry out a full repair. This is for their own safety.

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Our service

Our responsibilities

Your home. We repair and maintain the structure and outside parts of the property you live in.

Inside your home, we are responsible for water and gas pipes, wiring, heating systems, drainage, power and light fittings, and any items originally provided by us but not items that are your responsibility. See **What you must do** on page 9.

Your garden. We maintain all fences, walls and gates that border public roads or footpaths. We also maintain any post and wire fences that we originally provided between neighbouring properties.

We are responsible for any outbuildings, sheds or paved areas originally provided by us, and the main paths that lead to your front and back doors.

Safety - joint responsibilities

- We are responsible for carrying out a gas safety check once a year in any home we own or manage that has a gas supply. You must allow us into your home to carry out this check. This is for your safety. If you do not allow us in we will take legal action and charge for our costs.
- You must make sure that air vents do not become blocked.
- We service once a year any smoke detectors we have provided. For the safety of your family, please let us into your home to carry this out.

What repairs and maintenance is Mid Devon responsible for?

We are responsible for the outside of your property, the main structure and any fittings and appliances we have provided. See **Our responsibilities** on page 7 and your tenancy agreement.



We must, by law, carry out a service of any gas appliance that we are responsible for once a year. Also, we must carry out a safety check on all gas pipework in all the properties we own, even if it leads to your own appliance. This is done for us by specialist gas contractors. See **Gas servicing** in your **Tenant Handbook**. It is your responsibility to make sure that your own gas appliances are serviced once a year.

What if I can't carry out my responsibilities?

You are responsible for taking care of the inside of your home and for certain repairs. See **What you must do** on page 9. However, if you are vulnerable, elderly, infirm or disabled and have no able-bodied adult to help you, we may be able to help you or put you in touch with other organisations that can help.

Do I have to pay for any repairs?

If damage was caused by you or someone in your home, we expect you to arrange to get it repaired. If we have to do the repair to make sure you and your family are safe you will have to pay for the cost of the repair. See **Damage and charging** on page 9.

Can I claim for damage?

If damage was caused by our repair workers or contractors doing work for us you need to write to us and explain the problem. For any other damage, for example accidents, you may be able to claim on your home contents insurance. See **Insuring your home** in your **Tenant Handbook**.

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What you must do

Your general responsibilities are:

- to allow repair workers into your home to carry out repairs, safety checks and inspections
- to let us know as soon as you notice a repair is needed and to take action to prevent it getting worse
- to repair and maintain any fixture or appliance you own or took responsibility for when you began the tenancy
- to fit wastes, pipework and vents for washing machines, dishwashers and tumble driers, if not already fitted
- to take steps to prevent blockages in wastepipes or drains
- to arrange for the repair of any damage caused by you, a member of your household, a visitor or a pet.

Damage and charging

If you, or anyone in your home, cause damage to your home, we expect you to arrange to get it repaired. If we have to do the repair to make sure you and your family are safe you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.

If damage is caused by criminal behaviour, we will carry out work to make your home safe. We will only do further work if you supply us with a police incident number. For contact numbers, see page 3.

Improvements you have made

You can carry out improvements to your home provided you get our written permission before you start. You will be responsible for any repairs to the changes you make. See **Home improvements** in your **Tenant Handbook**.

Tasks you are responsible for

You are expected to do these yourself, or arrange and pay to get them done:

- replacing door locks or keys when keys are lost or broken, or you get locked out
- getting extra keys cut and gaining entry if you get locked out
- replacing broken or cracked glass in windows or doors unless you can give us a police incident number
- fitting draught proofing to doors or windows (if necessary)
- fitting and replacing door latches, handles, chains and spy holes
- repairing or replacing handles, catches or knobs on kitchen units
- fitting extra door or window locks
- adjusting doors, particularly when you have new floor coverings fitted
- fitting curtain rails, pelmets and coat hooks
- replacing light bulbs, fluorescent tubes and starters
- testing any smoke detector provided by us
- resetting trip switches
- getting chimneys swept if used for wood or coal fires
- filling minor cracks or holes in walls and ceilings
- trying to clear blocked basins, sinks, baths and toilets
- replacing toilet seats and flush chains
- replacing plugs and chains on baths, basins and sinks
- replacing clothes lines or restringing rotary driers (unless a shared area)
- maintaining garden paths except those leading to front or back doors, and any other general garden features, unless in shared areas
- maintaining any fence between neighbouring gardens, unless it is a post and wire fence provided by us
- keeping gully grids clear of leaves and rubbish
- replacing TV aerials and sockets (unless communal aerials).

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Response times

When you report a repair to us we will discuss the nature of the problem. We will then tell you what response time category we have placed it in. The response times are measured from the date you report the problem to us.

- Emergency. We will respond within four hours.** For repairs that remove immediate danger to people, avoid flooding or major damage to the property, make the property secure, or restore total loss of heating in winter (31st Oct-1st May). We will complete the repair at the time, if we can. If we can't, we will make the situation safe and carry out any follow-up work as an urgent or routine repair.
- Urgent. We will complete within seven working days.** For work to restore full or partial failure of sanitation, water or electrical supply, or heating systems. Also for urgent work to prevent immediate damage to the property, to overcome serious inconvenience to the household or where there is a possible health, safety or security risk.
- Routine. We will complete the repair within 35 working days.** For work where the fault or failure does not cause inconvenience or present a danger to occupants or the public. We may extend the timescale for certain repairs, for example if materials or parts need to be ordered.

Planned work. We put certain non-urgent work into 'packages' of work that can be carried out all together in an area. This is more efficient and costs less.

How long will it take?

When you report a repair, we will assess the problem and put it into a response time category. See **Emergency, Urgent, Routine** and **Planned work** on page 11. In some cases, we may make an appointment for an inspector to visit and assess exactly what work needs to be done.



For emergency repairs, a repair worker will call at your home as soon as possible, and will make the situation safe. If follow-up work is needed, this will be done as an urgent or routine repair. For urgent and routine repairs we will usually agree a morning (8am to 1pm) or afternoon (1pm to 4.30pm) appointment on a specific day when the work will be done.

What if the work is not done on time?

If a repair worker does not come within the response time or keep to a specific morning or afternoon appointment agreed with you, please contact us immediately. In certain circumstances we will make a payment to you for the inconvenience. See **Complaints** in your **Tenant Handbook**.

Under the Right to Repair regulations, you have a right to have certain repairs done within set time limits. See **Right to Repair** on page 13.

Can I change or cancel an appointment?

Yes. If you cannot keep to an agreed appointment or if a repair is no longer needed, please contact us as soon as possible. If you do not contact us and our repair worker finds that no-one is at home, the repair will be cancelled. You may be charged for wasting the repair worker's time. If you still need us to do the repair, you will need to report the problem to us again.



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Right to Repair

Tenants' Right to Repair

The Right to Repair is part of the Citizen's Charter scheme. It gives you the right to have certain repairs done within set time limits. These are repairs which, if not carried out on time, could affect your health, safety and security. They are called **qualifying repairs**. We will let you know if your repair is a qualifying repair.

If we do not complete a qualifying repair within the time allowed, you have the right to tell us to get another contractor to do the work. If they fail to do the work within the new time limit you may be entitled to compensation.

Contact us if you think that you want to exercise your Right to Repair. Also, see **Complaints** in your **Tenant Handbook**.

Within 1 working day

- Gas leaks or loss of gas supply.
- Serious internal water leak.
- Loss of water supply to all parts of the home.
- Dangerous electrics (electric shock, bare wires) and unsafe electrical sockets or fittings.
- Total loss of electricity supply.
- Blocked drain (when backing up into property).
- Blocked toilet or toilet not flushing (when no other toilet in the home).
- Blocked flue to open fire or boiler.
- Leaking roof (temporary repair).
- Door or window insecure.
- Loss of room or water heating (total or partial) between 31st October and 1st May.

Within 3 working days

- Partial loss of electrical supply.
- Blocked bath, basin or sink.
- Blocked toilet (when another toilet in the home can be used).
- Broken or rotten wood floors or stairs.
- Loss of room or water heating (total or partial) between 30th April and 1st November.
- Faulty communal door.
- Stiff or seized tap or valve.
- Broken or loose balustrade or handrail.

Within 7 working days

- Faulty extractor fan in kitchen or bathroom.
- Rain coming in through the roof.
- Door entry phone not working.

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Our standards

Our code of behaviour

Our office staff will:

- answer calls promptly
- be polite, honest and helpful.

Anyone working in your home will:

- treat you with respect and always behave in a professional way
- introduce themselves and show you photo identification before entering
- explain what they are going to do and discuss how this will affect you
- protect your belongings from damage, dust and paint
- make sure materials and tools do not cause danger to anyone
- keep you informed about how the work is progressing
- clear rubbish from your home at the end of each working day
- make sure electricity, water and gas are connected at the end of the day
- be dressed appropriately for the type of work they do.

Repair workers are not allowed to:

- smoke, play radios, use offensive language or behave inappropriately in or around the home
- use mobile phones to make or receive personal phone calls during their work time
- be in your home without you or a responsible adult being present
- receive money, services or gifts from tenants
- keep keys to residents' homes
- do private work for tenants or leaseholders.

Also, they must ask your permission to:

- use your phone or toilet
- go into other rooms in your home
- take their lunch break in your home.

If you would like full copies of our **Service Charter** and **Code of Practice**, please contact us.

What standard of service can I expect?

We will respond to repair problems in an efficient and helpful way. Most repairs are carried out by our own repair workers. We sometimes need to use specialist contractors. If this happens we will tell you the name of the contractor. Anyone working in or around your home must follow certain rules of behaviour. See **Our code of behaviour** on page 15.



Do you check up on the quality of service or workmanship?

We enclose a feedback form with the repair confirmation letter we send out to you for all repairs except emergencies. Please fill this in and return it to us. The postage is free. We use all the information we receive to identify areas where we need to improve our service.

We also carry out regular checks to make sure that we provide a good standard of service. This is done by selecting a number of completed repairs on a random basis. We then contact you by phone to find out what you thought of our service. Our inspectors also check twenty percent of all jobs for the standard of workmanship. They will phone you to discuss the work with you or visit your home to look at the repair.

What if I am not satisfied with the service or want to make a suggestion?

Please contact us. We have a clear process we suggest you follow. This is set out in **Complaints and Compliments** in your **Tenant Handbook**. In certain circumstances we will give you a compensation payment, for example if our repair workers miss appointments without contacting you beforehand or do not complete the work within two working days of the target completion date.

Our standards

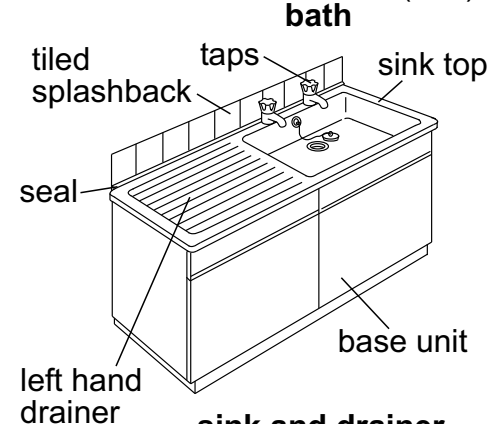
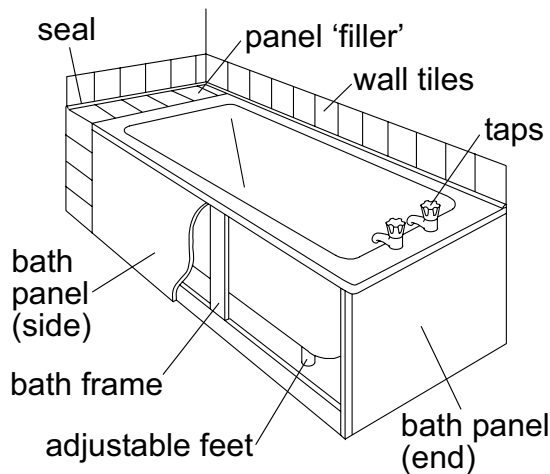
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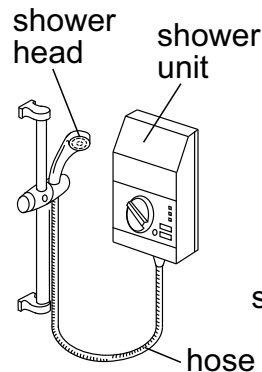
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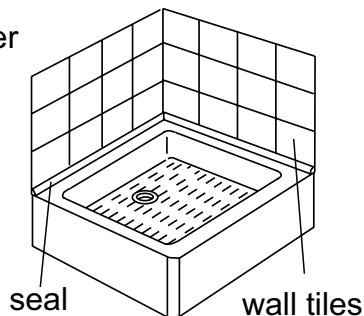
Baths and basins



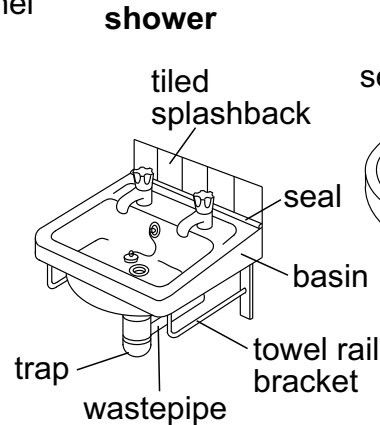
sink and drainer



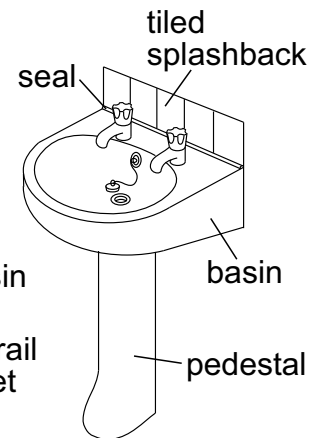
electric shower



shower tray



wash hand basins



Your responsibilities

- Trying to clear blocked baths, basins and sinks. See **Handy hints** on page 47.
- Replacing plugs and chains to baths, basins and sinks.
- Repairing any items you have installed yourself, for example shower, extra tiles.

Advice

- For water leaks or tap problems, see **Waterpipes and taps** on page 41 and **Drains and wastes** on page 21.
- A blocked wastepipe is not an emergency. You must try to clear it yourself before you call us. See **Handy hints** on page 47. We will charge you for clearing blockages caused by items such as toys, hair, cooking fat and so on.
- We expect you to take action to prevent drains becoming blocked. See **Handy hints** on page 47.
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.
- If we need to replace bathroom fittings which are part of a suite we will try to find a colour match. If we cannot find a match we will provide it in white.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** bathroom fittings loose or broken; wastepipe leaking or blocked; splashback wall tiles cracked or broken?
- **If a panel, is it at the side or the end?** Is it made of plastic or hardboard?
- **If a bath or basin, what is it made of:** plastic, ceramic or metal? What colour is it?
- **If tiles, what shape, size and colour are they?**

Baths, basins

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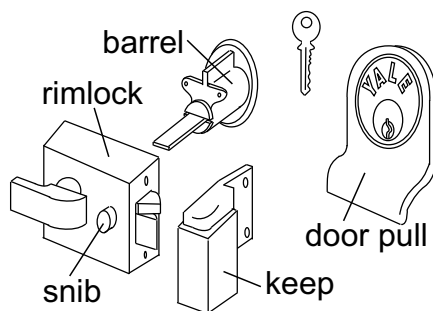
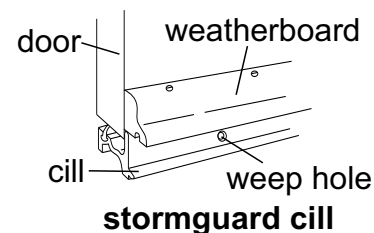
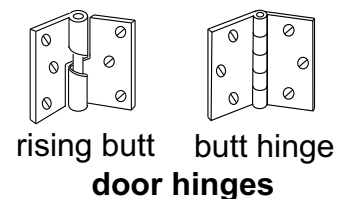
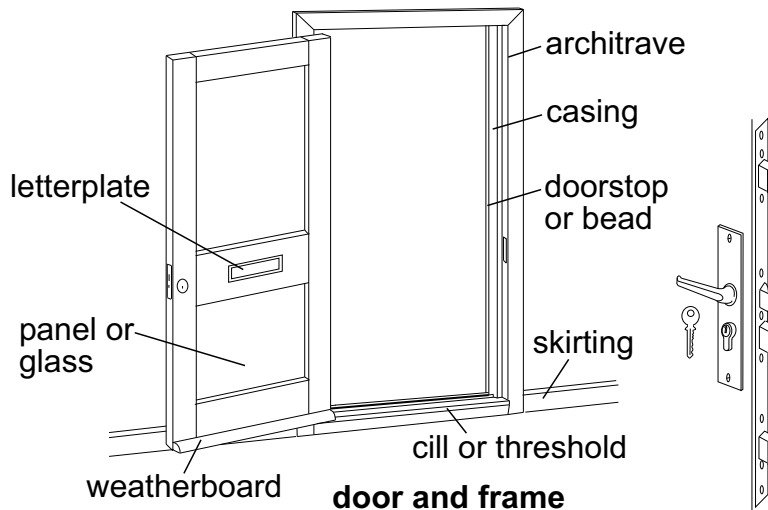
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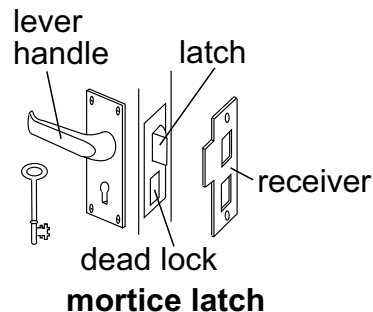
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Doors and locks

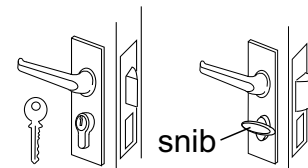


**cylinder rim nightlatch
(Yale or Union)**

**multi-point lock
(espagnolette)**



rim lock



**cylinder mortice
lock (snib inside)**

Your responsibilities

- Replacing keys or locks when keys are lost or broken, or you get locked out.
- Getting extra keys cut and gaining entry to your home if you get locked out.
- Fitting or replacing handles, latches, security chains, spy holes or extra locks.
- Adjusting doors particularly when you fit new carpets or laminate flooring.
- Replacing broken or cracked glass unless you have a police incident number.
- Fitting draught-proofing to doors, if this is necessary.

Advice

- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.
- If a repair is an emergency we will make the property safe and secure. Any further work necessary will be done as an urgent or routine repair.
- If a problem is caused by criminal behaviour, you should report it to the police. We will carry out work to make your home safe. We will only do further work if you provide us with a police incident number.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, eg:** lock stiff or not fitting properly into the keep; lock or handle broken; door sticking, not closing properly or damaged?
- **Which door is it:** front, back or side, or a patio door? Is it a communal door? What type of lock or latch has it got? **Is the property still secure?**
- **What is it made of:** wood, plastic (upvc) or metal?
- **What type of lock is it:** mortice, cylinder mortice, rimlock, multipoint or cylinder rim nightlatch (Yale or Union)?



Doors, locks

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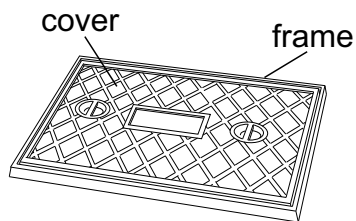
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Drains, wastes

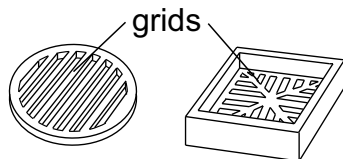
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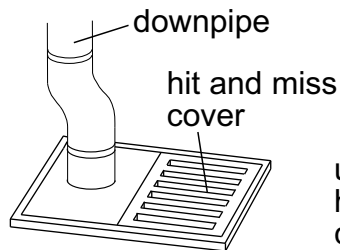
Drains and wastes



inspection chamber



gully grids



back inlet gully



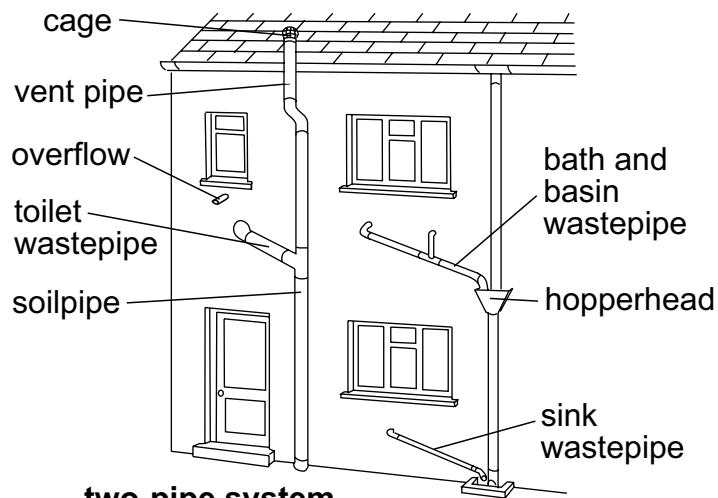
bottle trap



'P' trap



'S' trap



two-pipe system

Your responsibilities

- Trying to clear blocked baths, basins, sinks or toilets.
- Clearing blockages or repairing leaks from washing machines or dishwashers.
- Keeping gully grids clear of leaves and rubbish.
- Cleaning wastepipes and drains regularly to prevent blockages.

Advice

- A blocked wastepipe is not an emergency. You are expected to try to clear it yourself before calling us. See **Handy hints** on page 47. A blocked toilet is not an emergency unless you have no other toilet you can use.
- Keep your wastepipes and drains clear by flushing them regularly with hot water and using domestic cleaning products.
- Do not pour fat or any kind of oil down sinks, toilets or outside drains.
- If a blockage is caused by items such as nappies, air fresheners, condoms, tampons and so on, we will charge you for the cost of clearing it.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** wastepipe or trap blocked or leaking; drain smelling or blocked; gully blocked or grid missing?
- **If a wastepipe, which is it:** bath, basin, sink, shower or toilet?
- **If a wastepipe is blocked:** is more than one fitting blocked, or if you live in a block of flats, are any other flats affected?
- **If the drain is blocked, is it overflowing?**
- **If a gully grid, is it round or square?** What is it made of: metal or plastic?



Drains, wastes

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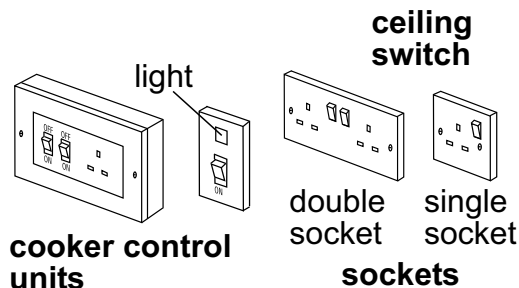
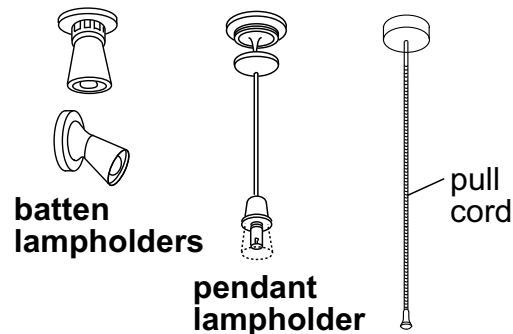
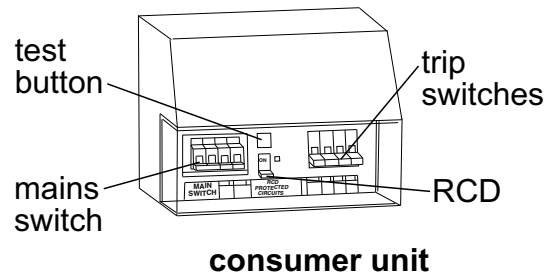
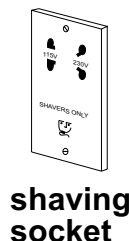
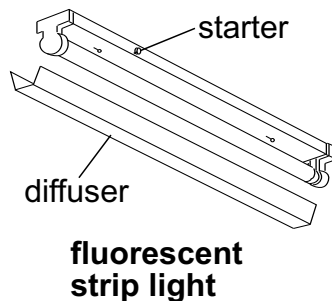
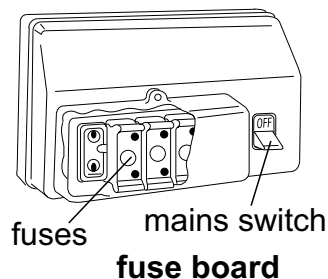
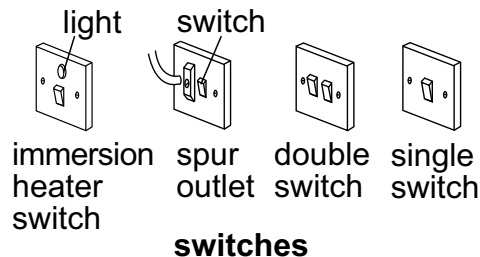
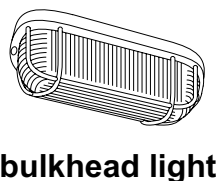
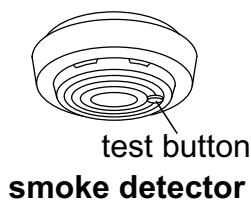
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Electrics



Your responsibilities

- Resetting trip switches and, if necessary, turning off the mains supply. See **Handy hints** on page 49.
- Replacing light bulbs, fluorescent tubes and starters.
- Testing and cleaning any smoke detectors provided by us. See **Handy hints** on page 57.

Advice

- **Do not touch** bare wires and **do not touch** sockets or switches with wet hands. Also, if water is leaking onto electrical fittings or a fitting is dangerous, **do not use or touch** any switches connected to it. Contact us immediately.
- Make sure that you know where the trip switches are located in your home and understand how to reset them. See **Handy hints** on page 49.
- Do not remove, change or add any electrical fitting without our permission.
- If you have no power, check that you have enough credit in your electricity meter. If you call us out and this is the reason you have no power, we will charge you for the cost of the call out.
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause any damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, eg:** no lights or power in part of, or throughout, the property; light or light switch not working; socket loose or broken?
- **What type of fitting or socket is it?**
- **Are other homes in your block or nearby buildings affected?**
- **Are there any other connected problems?**

Electrics

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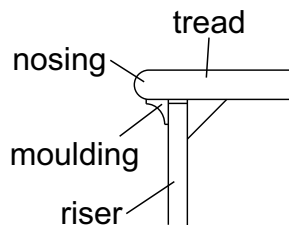
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Floors, stairs

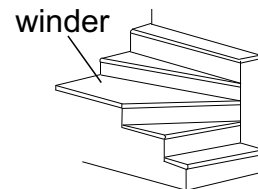
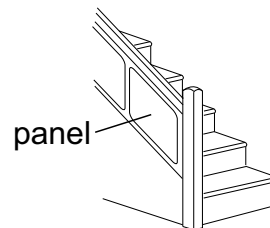
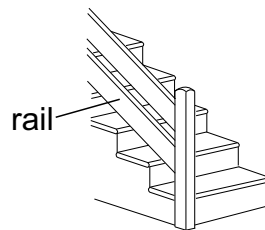
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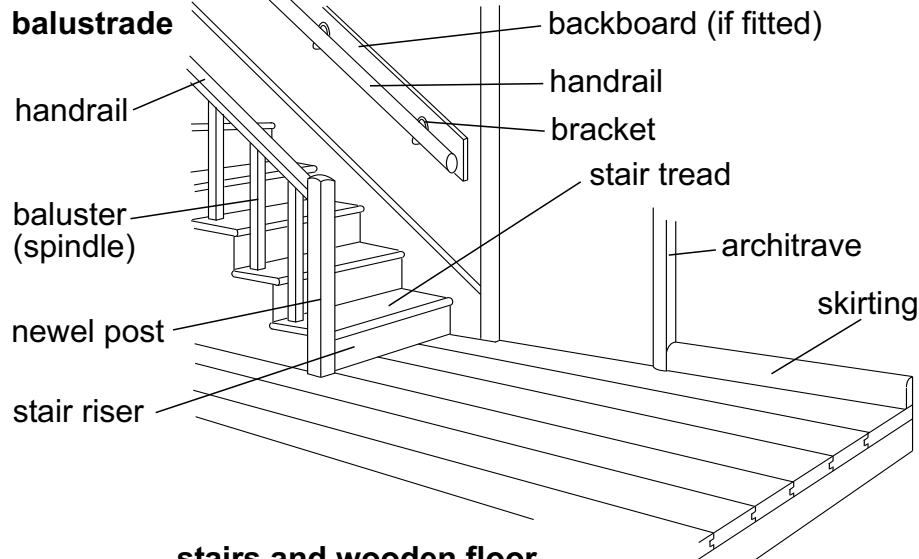
Floors and stairs



step details



types of stairs



stairs and wooden floor

Your responsibilities

Advice

- Repairing any floor covering you have fitted.

- We will not accept responsibility for damage to your carpets or other floor coverings, unless it is caused by neglect by our repair workers. If we tell you that you need to lift your own floor covering (including laminate flooring), you should do this before the repair workers arrive. If you are having difficulties arranging this, please let us know.
- If you lay carpets these should ideally be held down with gripper rods. This makes it easier for you to lift them for repairs without damaging them.
- If we have to replace floor tiles, we will try to match the colour but this is often not possible.
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** floorboard or skirting loose or damaged; tread, riser or nosing broken; handrail loose or broken; floor covering lifting or damaged?
- **What is the floor made of:** floorboards, chipboard, hardboard or concrete?
- **What type of floor covering is it, for example:** quarry tiles (red), plastic tiles or sheeting, or slip resistant flooring? **Is it in a communal area?**
- **How many boards, panels or tiles are affected?**
- **If stair nosing, is it on communal stairs? If so, is it metal or plastic?**

Floors, stairs

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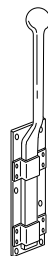
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Garages

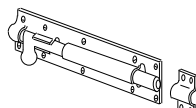
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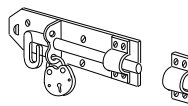
Garages



monkey tail bolt



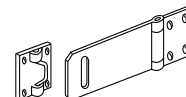
barrel bolt



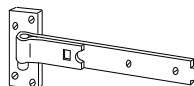
pad bolt



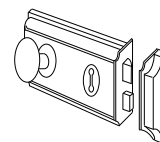
henderson lock



hasp and staple



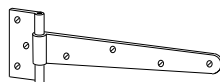
hook and band hinge



rim lock



cylinder lock

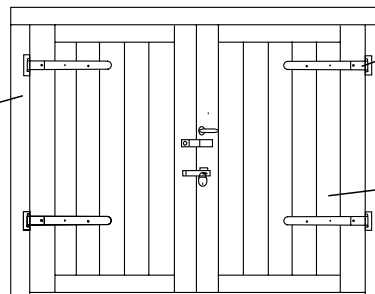


'T' hinge

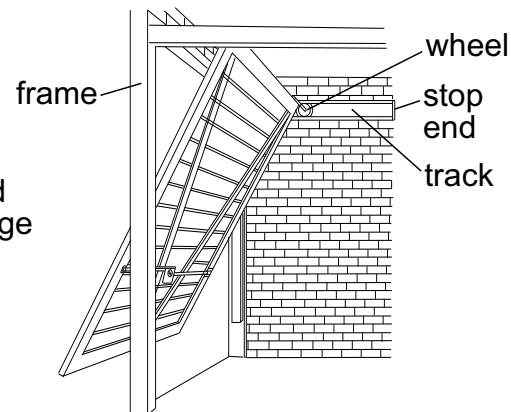


butt hinge

hinges



side-hung garage door



up-and-over garage door

Your responsibilities

- Replacing keys or locks to garages when keys are lost or broken.
- Gaining entry to your garage if you get locked out.

Advice

- If a problem is caused by criminal behaviour, you should report it to the police. We will only do work if you provide us with a police incident number.
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.
- If your garage is separate from your home, you need to explain how we can find it and get in.
- If a garage cannot be locked, you are responsible for the security of anything inside. You must not leave any dangerous items in it (such as petrol, oil, bottled gas or other materials) that could explode or catch fire.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** garage door jammed; frame damaged; roof damaged or leaking?
- **If a garage, what type of door is it, for example:** up-and-over (metal) or side-hung (wooden)?
- **Is the car stuck inside?**
- **If a garage roof, what type is it:** corrugated, tiled or flat?
If corrugated, what is it made of: metal or some other material?



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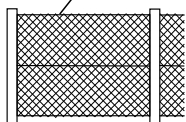
Garden area

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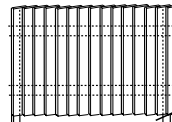
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Garden area

straining wire

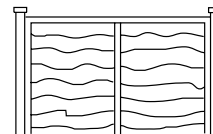


chain link

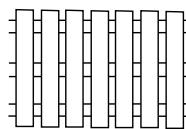


**close boarding
(feather-edged)**

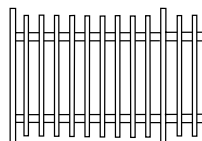
gravel board



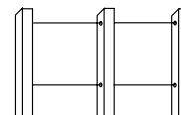
larch lap



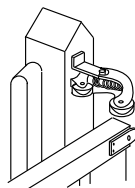
hit and miss



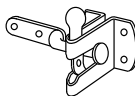
metal railings



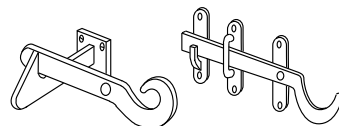
post and wire



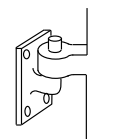
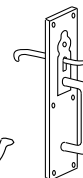
**automatic
latches**



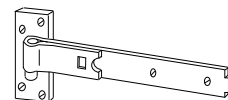
gate catches



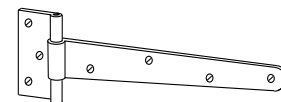
hand latches



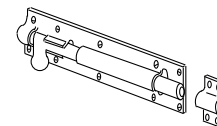
hook hinge



hook and band hinge



**'T' hinge
hinges**



barrel bolt

Your responsibilities

- Replacing keys or locks to shed doors when keys are lost or broken.
- Maintaining garden paths (except those leading from the road to your front or back doors) and any other general garden features (unless in shared areas).
- Maintaining any fence between neighbouring gardens, unless it is a post and wire fence provided by us.
- Replacing clothes lines or restringing rotary driers, unless in shared areas.

Advice

- If a problem is caused by criminal behaviour, you should report it to the police. We will only do work if you provide us with a police incident number.
- If you are unsure which fences you are responsible for, you can check the details given in your Tenancy Agreement.
- Do not grow shrubs or climbing plants near or against house walls. These can damage brickwork and foundations, and can cause damp problems.
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** fence loose or broken; gate sticking; gate catch missing; path uneven or cracked?
- **If a fence, what type is it, for example:** post and wire, wooden boarding, chain link or metal railings? **How much is affected?**
- **If a gate or post, what type is it, for example:** wooden, metal or concrete (posts only)?
- **If a path, what is it made of, for example:** slabs, concrete, tarmac, blocks?



Garden area

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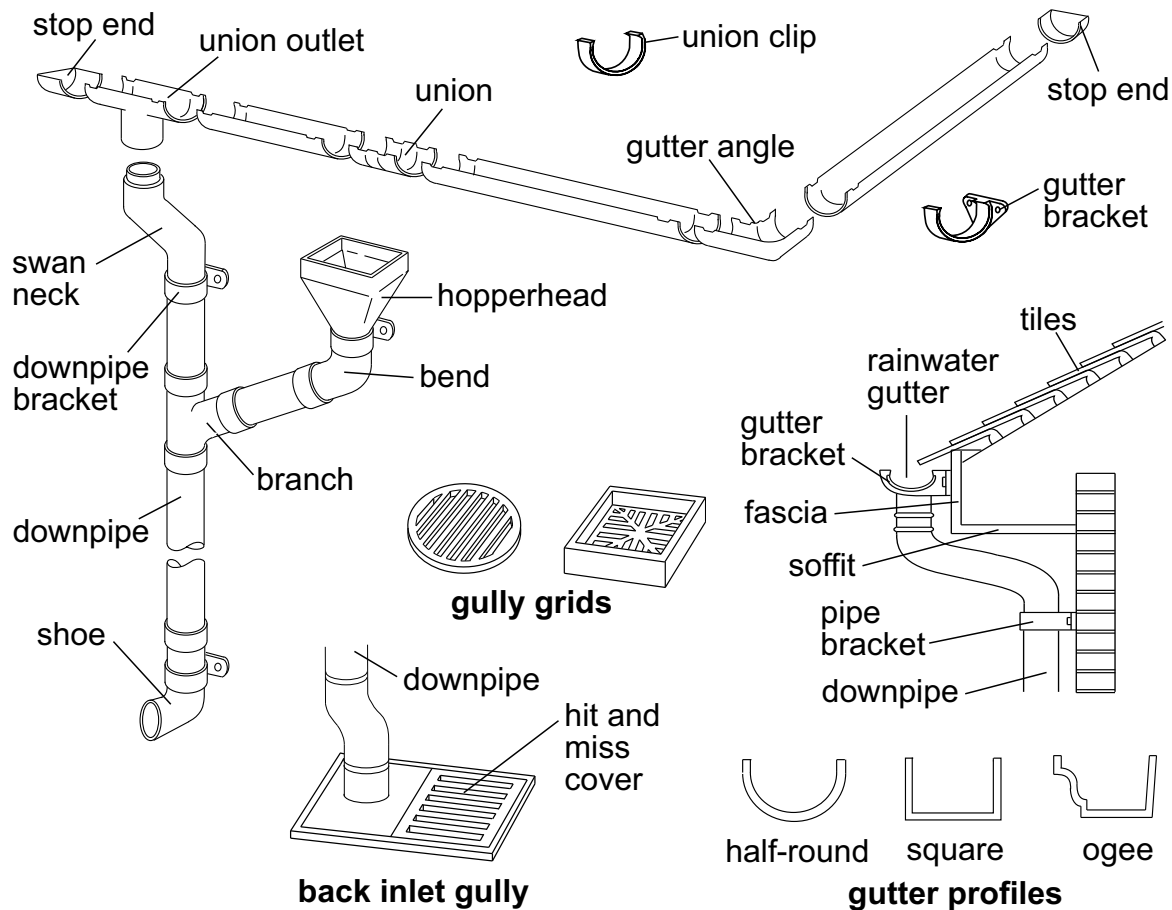
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Gutters



Your responsibilities

Advice

We need to know

- Keeping gully grids clear of leaves and rubbish.

- We may need to put up scaffolding for certain types of gutter repair.
- In bad weather conditions repair workers cannot work at height, for example on ladders, scaffolding or on the roof. This is for their own safety.
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.

- **What is the problem, eg:** gutter or downpipe loose, leaking or blocked; bracket, joint or shoe loose or broken?
- **Which gutter or downpipe is it:** front, back or side?
- **What is it made of:** plastic, cast iron or aluminium?
- **What shape is it:** half-round, square or ogee? **What colour is it?**
- **If a gully grid:** is it round or square? **What is it made of:** metal or plastic?
- **How many storeys high is the building?**
- **Are there any other connected problems?**
- **What is the gutter or downpipe made of:** metal, plastic, or concrete?



Gutters

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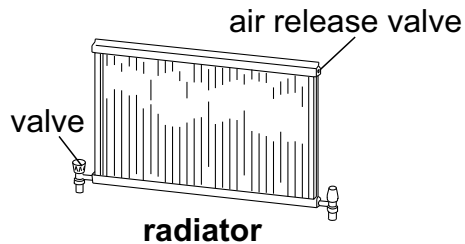
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Heating

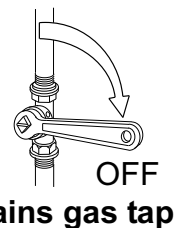
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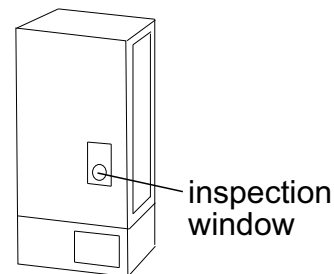
Heating



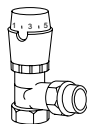
radiator



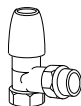
mains gas tap



**wall-mounted
central heating boiler**



**thermostatic
valve**

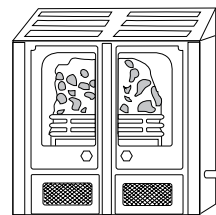


**lockshield
valve**



**wheelhead
valve**

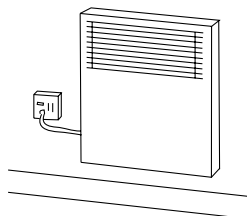
radiator valves



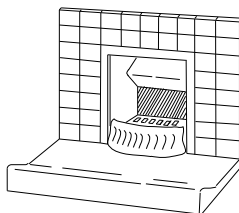
closed fire



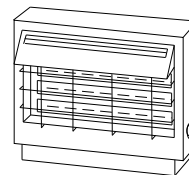
**bathroom
heater**



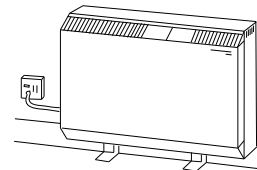
convector heater



open fire



gas fire



electric storage heater

Your responsibilities

Advice

- If you smell gas contact **National Grid (Gas)** immediately on **0800 111999**. See **Emergencies** on page 4.

- We respond to heating breakdowns on the day you call. If the heating is not working in winter by the end of the day, we will provide you with a temporary heater, unless you have some other form of heating.
- We expect you to keep your home properly heated and ventilated to prevent condensation. See **Handy hints** on page 51.
- You should make sure that your gas or electricity supply has not been disconnected because you have not paid your bill or not put enough credit in the meter.
- If a radiator is leaking or loose because you have been doing redecoration work, you will be charged for the cost of the repair.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** central heating not working; no hot water; radiator leaking or not getting warm; fire or heater not working?
- **What type of system is it:** gas, electric, wood or coal (solid fuel)?
- **If solid fuel (wood or coal):** does it have a boiler? Does it have a closed or an open fire in front?
- **If electric, what type is it:** storage heaters, warm air or boiler and radiators?
- **Have you any other form of heating or hot water heating, for example:** an electric immersion heater?
- **If a radiator:** is it warm at the bottom and cold at the top?



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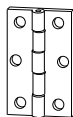
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Internal fittings

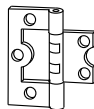
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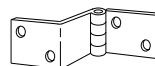
Internal fittings



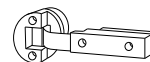
butt hinge



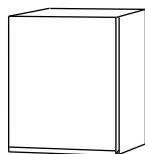
flush hinge



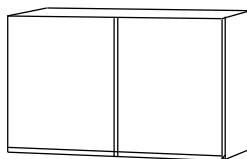
cranked hinge



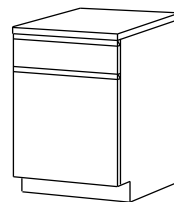
concealed hinge



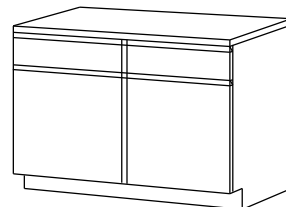
single wall unit



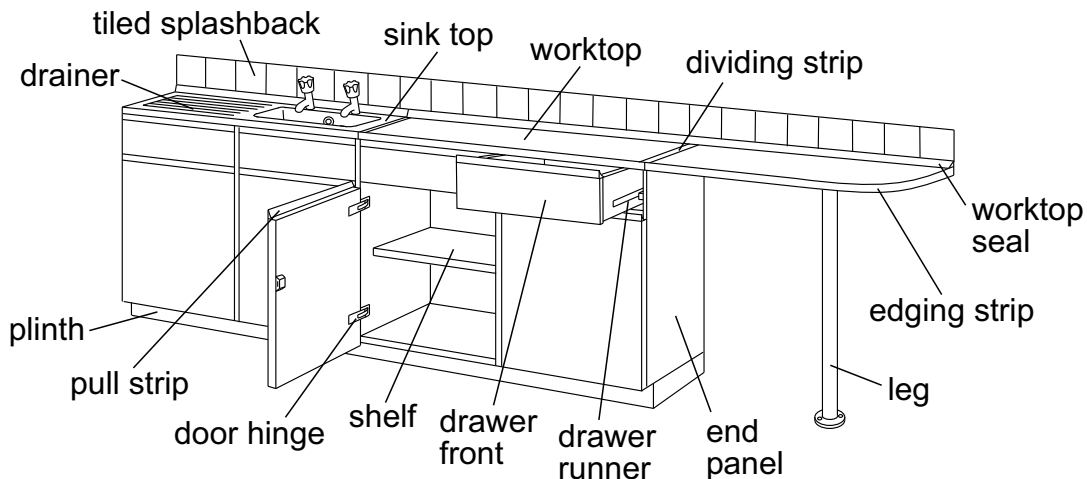
double wall unit



**single base unit
with drawer**



**double base unit
with drawers**



Your responsibilities

- Repairing any extra kitchen units you have installed.
- Repairing or replacing handles, catches or knobs on kitchen units.
- Installing washing machines, dishwashers or tumble driers including the wastes, supply pipes and vents if not already provided. See **Advice** below.
- Clearing any blockages in your washing machine or dishwasher.
- Fitting pipework for the supply of water to dishwashers and washing machines, and fitting vents for tumble driers, if not already provided.

Advice

- If you, a member of your family or a visitor cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.
- If we have to replace kitchen units or parts of a unit, such as the worktop, drawer or door, we will try to match the colour, but this may not be possible.
- If you install a washing machine, dishwasher or tumble drier, you are responsible for any water supply, waste or vent connections that you have fitted to them and for clearing any blockages.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** wall or floor unit loose or damaged; worktop loose or broken; cupboard door or drawer damaged; hinge broken?
- **What type of unit is it:** wall or floor? Is it a tall unit or a corner unit? Is it a single or a double unit?
- **If wall tiles, what shape, size and colour are they?**
- **Are there any other connected problems?**



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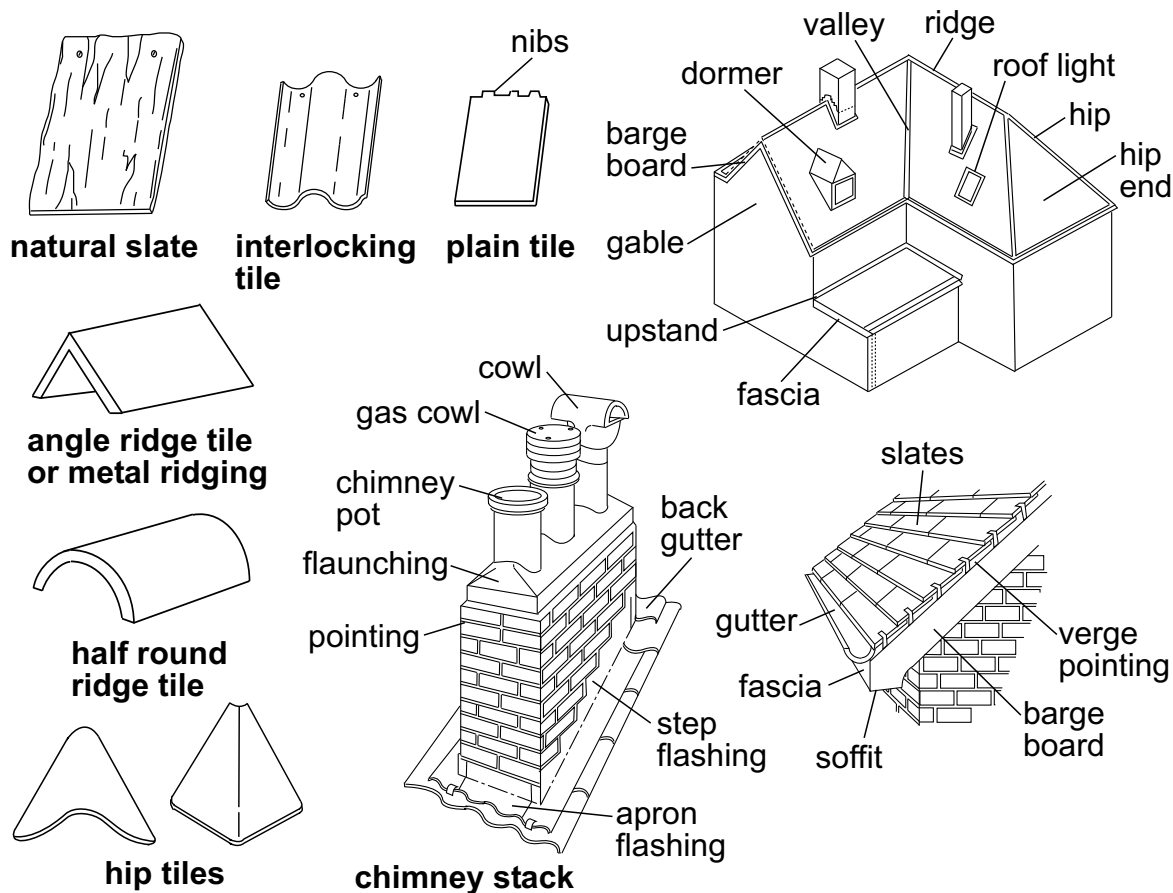
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Roofs



Your responsibilities

- Looking after any aerial or satellite dish you put up, or any aerial that was on the building when you moved in, unless it is a communal aerial.
- Putting up and taking down TV aerials and satellite dishes.
- Getting your chimney swept once a year if you use it for a wood or coal fire.

Advice

- We may need to put up scaffolding for a roof repair but in bad weather conditions repair workers cannot work at height at all.
- If electrical fittings are getting wet because the roof is leaking, do not use any switches connected to them and contact us immediately.
- If you want to put up a satellite dish you need to get our permission first.
- We will tell you if an aerial or satellite dish needs to be taken down before we carry out repair work. You need to arrange for it to be taken down and put back up again afterwards.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** roof leaking; tiles or slates loose or broken; chimney pot fallen or loose; chimney stack crumbling? (We only expect you to describe what you can see from the ground.)
- **What type of roof covering is it, for example:** slate, tiles, corrugated sheeting, flat felting or asphalt?
- **If tiles, what type are they, for example:** flat, ridge, interlocking, hip?
- **How many storeys high is the property?**
- **Is the chimney shared with another property?** What is the address?

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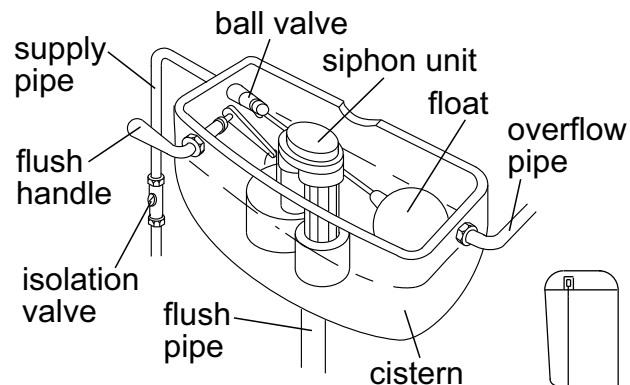
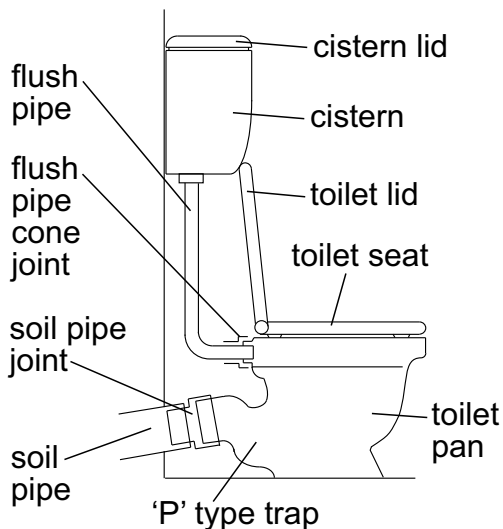
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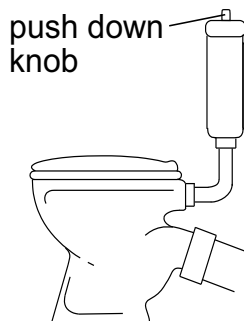
Toilets



toilet cistern



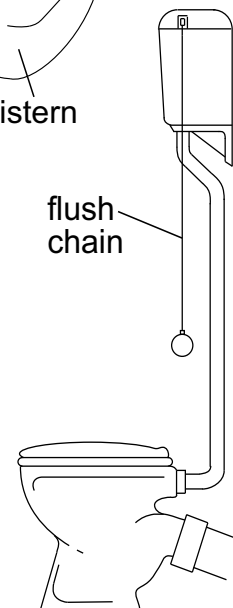
close-coupled



flush panel



standard



high-level cistern

low-level cisterns

Your responsibilities

- Repairing or replacing toilet seats.
- Replacing broken flush chains.
- Trying to clear blocked toilets. See **Handy hints** on page 47.

Advice

- A blocked toilet is not an emergency unless you have no other toilet you can use.
- If a blockage is caused by items such as nappies, air fresheners, condoms, tampons and so on, we will charge you for the cost of clearing it.
- We recommend you clean and clear your toilet regularly using domestic cleaning products. Always follow instructions carefully.
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.
- If we need to replace a toilet which is part of an existing suite, we will try to find a colour match. If we cannot find a match we will provide it in white.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** toilet blocked; overflow running; cistern leaking; pan cracked or leaking; flush handle or chain broken?
- **What type of cistern is it:** high-level, low-level. If low-level, is it a flush panel, close-coupled or standard type? **What colour is the suite?**
- **What type of handle is it:** lever handle, push down knob or chain?
- **If toilet is blocked in a block of flats,** are any other flats affected?
- **If a soil pipe, how is it fitted:** out through the wall or down through the floor?

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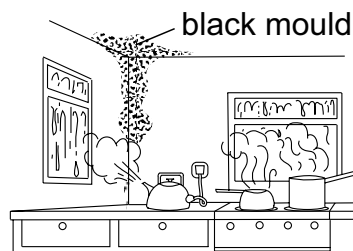
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Walls, ceilings

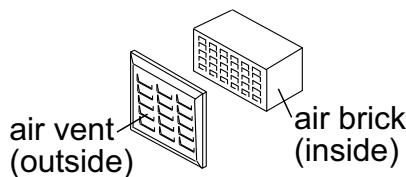
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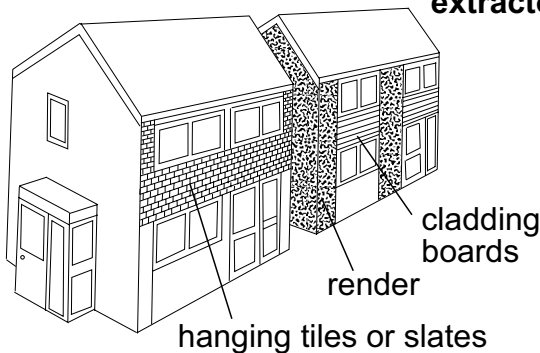
Walls and ceilings



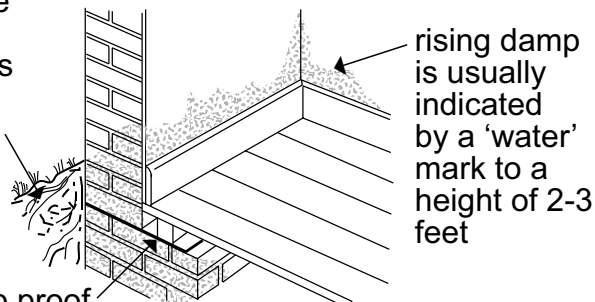
condensation



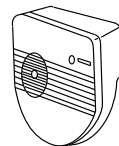
ventilation



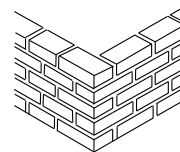
a possible cause of dampness is earth mounded over the damp proof course



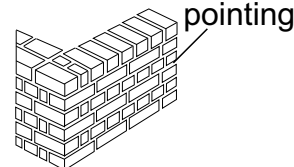
damp or mould



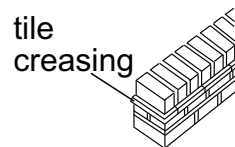
extractor fan



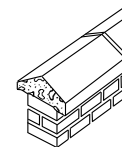
half brick wall



full brick wall



brick on edge coping



precast concrete coping

boundary walls

Your responsibilities

Advice

- Filling minor cracks and holes in walls and ceilings.
- Fitting curtain rails, pelmets and coat hooks.

- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.
- We expect you to control the build up of moisture in your home to prevent damp and mould appearing on the walls or ceiling. See **Handy hints** on page 51. In particular, you should keep air vents clear and use extractor fans (where provided) to prevent condensation.
- If you fix things to the wall or ceiling you must remove them and repair any damage before you move out. See **Ending your tenancy** in your **Tenant Handbook**.
- Do not grow shrubs or climbing plants near or against house walls. These can damage brickwork and foundations, and can cause damp problems.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** wall plaster loose or crumbling; ceiling plaster bulging; condensation or mould on walls or ceiling?
- **Is there any damage caused by water leaking?**
- **If outside, what type of wall surface is it:** render (pebbledash or smooth), upvc boards, timberboards, or hanging tiles or slates?
- **If wall tiles (inside), what shape, size and colour are they?**
- **If a wall, what is it made of:** brick or concrete blocks?



Walls, ceilings

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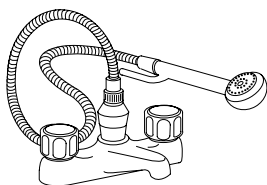
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Waterpipes, taps

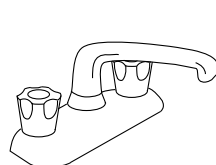
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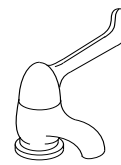
Waterpipes and taps



shower mixer tap



mixer tap



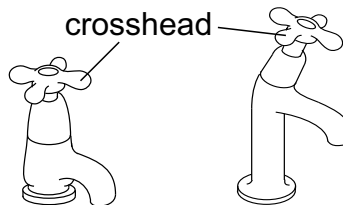
lever tap

handwheel



modern

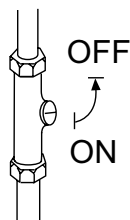
crosshead



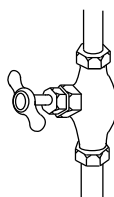
standard

high neck

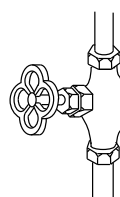
pillar taps



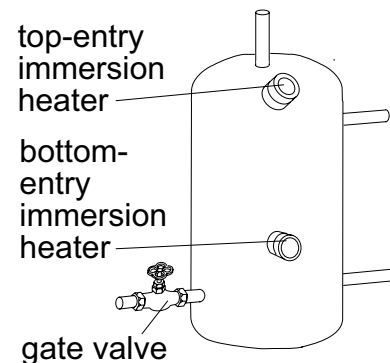
isolation valve



**stoptap
(mains water)**



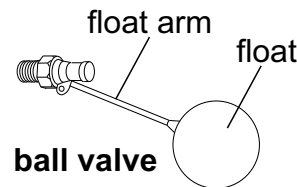
**gate valve
(controls part of the system)**



hot water cylinder



draintap (drain valve)



ball valve

Your responsibilities

- Turning off your water supply at the stoptap if a water pipe has burst, and then turning on all taps to allow remaining water to flow out.
- Fitting pipework for the supply of water to washing machines or dishwashers, if not already provided.

Advice

- You should know where the stoptap is in order to turn the water off in an emergency. This may be written in the box on page 2. If you can't find it, contact us and we will tell you.
- If water is leaking onto electrical fittings, do not touch them. Turn the 'Mains' switch on the consumer unit to the 'OFF' position to turn off the electricity. See **Handy hints** on page 49.
- If water leaks from your washing machine, dishwasher or as a result of an accident, we will charge you for repairing the damage but you may be able to reclaim this on your own contents insurance. See **Insuring your home** in your **Tenant Handbook**.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** no water; water not getting hot; pipe leaking or burst; overflow running or broken; tap dripping or faulty?
- **If water is leaking into your property:** is it coming from the flat above? What is the address? **Are there any other connected problems?**
- **If no water:** do your neighbours have water or not?
- **If a tap, what type is it? Is the tap head made of plastic or metal?**



Waterpipes, taps

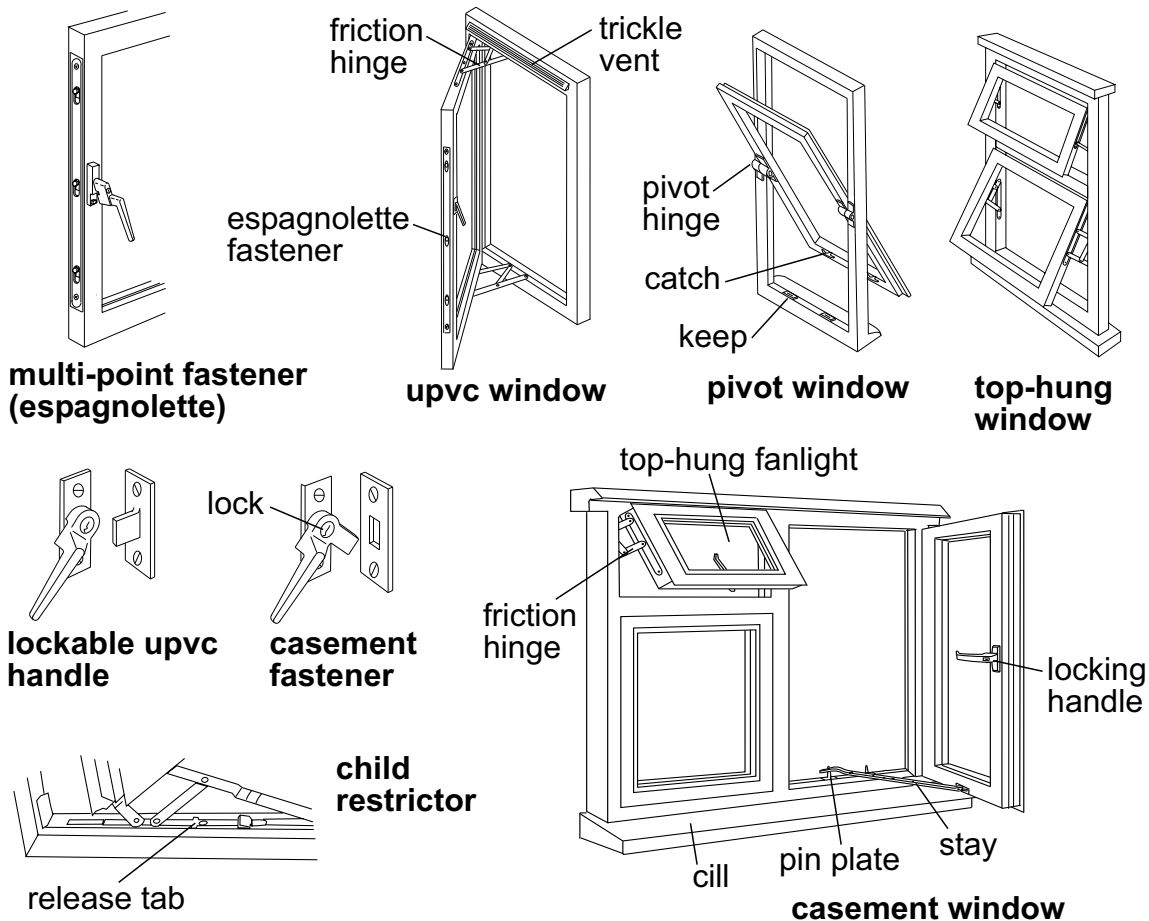
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Windows



Your responsibilities

- Replacing broken or cracked glass unless you have a police incident number.
- Fitting window locks, unless they are already provided as part of the window handles.
- Fitting draught-proofing to windows if this is necessary.

Advice

- If a problem is caused by criminal behaviour, you should report it to the police. We will carry out work to make your home safe. We will only do further work if you provide us with a police incident number.
- You should keep window trickle vents clear and use them to prevent condensation.
- If you, a member of your family or a visitor cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.

We need to know

- **What is the problem, for example:** glass cracked or broken; frame loose or jammed; stay or fastener broken?
- **What type of frame is it:** wooden, plastic (upvc) or metal?
- **What style of window is it:** casement, sliding sash or pivot?
- **What type of glass is it, for example:** plain, obscure, or wired? Is it double glazed?
- **Are there any other connected problems?**
- **If a fastener, what type is it, for example:** multipoint, casement or other type?



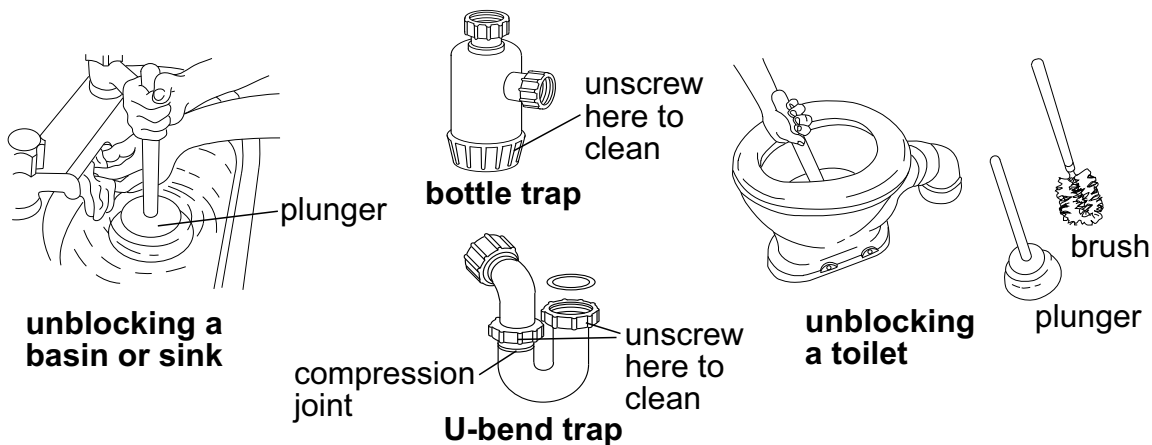
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Handy hints

Clearing a blocked waste



General advice

- Blockages in basins and sinks are usually caused by the build-up of waste in the trap: fat, tea leaves, hair, cooking oil etc. We advise you to clear wastepipes and traps at least once a month with a domestic cleaning product. Always follow the instructions carefully. **Do not** use caustic soda as it destroys plastic fittings.
- The trap always holds some water which stops air or foul smells coming up the drain. However, waste can build up and become stuck in it.
- If more than one fitting (bath, basin or sink) is blocked, the blockage may be in the soil stack or main drain. This will need to be cleared by us. Contact us.
- Blockages in toilets are usually caused by unusual objects: nappies, toys or toilet fresheners. You must not use toilets as rubbish or waste disposers.

What to do

You need:

- bowl or bucket
- jug or cup to be used as a scoop
- wet rag or dishcloth
- plunger - for the toilet you can use a toilet brush or mop
- protective gloves.

To unblock a bath, basin or sink:

- scoop out most of the water
- hold the rag tightly over the overflow opening
- place the plunger over the plug hole and pump it up and down rapidly.

To unblock a toilet:

- if the pan is already full, remove some of the water into a bucket using some form of scoop, eg a jug or cup
- push the brush or plunger to the bottom of the pan
- pump it up and down vigorously about 10 times. This creates a vacuum and pressure, which may shift the blockage
- flush the toilet to see whether the blockage has gone.

You may need to repeat this process several times before the toilet flushes normally. If there is no improvement after a couple of attempts, you should contact us.

Thoroughly wash your hands and all equipment after you have finished.

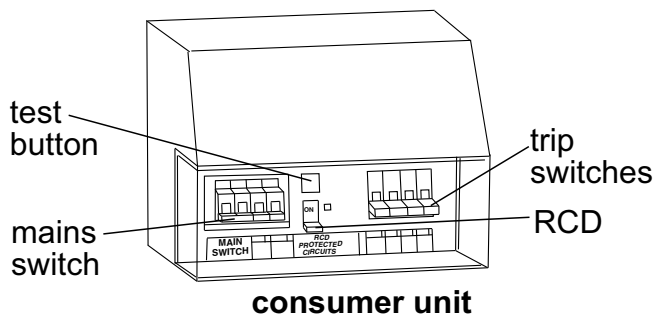
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Handy hints

Resetting a trip switch

If your lights or power go off, it means your trip switches are working properly.
You can find out what caused the problem and sort it out quite easily.



(This advice only applies to modern consumer units. If you have an older 'fuse board' type with rewirable fuses or cartridges, do not touch it and contact us immediately.)

General advice

- Modern electric circuits are fitted with circuit breakers called trip switches. If a fault develops, a switch is tripped and the circuit is broken. You will find all of the trip switches (or fuses) in the consumer unit. Some consumer units have buttons rather than switches.
- If one of your electrical appliances is faulty, leave it unplugged and get a qualified electrician or service engineer to check it.
- If a wall or ceiling light is faulty, keep it switched off (put some tape over the switch) and contact us.
- **Make sure your hands are dry when you touch electrical fittings.**

General advice (continued)

- A trip switch or button usually operates because:
 - there are too many appliances on a circuit and it is overloaded
 - an appliance is faulty or has been misused, such as a kettle has been over-filled or a toaster not cleaned
 - water has leaked into a circuit or spilt onto a plug
 - a light bulb has blown
 - an immersion heater is faulty.

To reset a trip:

- open the cover on the consumer unit to expose the trip switches/buttons
- check which switches or buttons have tripped to the OFF position and which rooms (circuit) have been affected
- put these switches or buttons back to the ON position.

If the trip goes again. It is probably being caused by a faulty appliance or light. You need to identify which circuit is being affected and which appliance on that circuit is causing the problem:

- check all the rooms and note which set of lights or sockets is not working
- unplug all appliances on that problem circuit, and switch off the immersion heater
- switch the 'tripped' switch to the ON position (press in if it is a button)
- plug in the appliances or switch on each light one at a time until the trip goes again. Do not use adaptors or multiplug extensions when testing appliances.

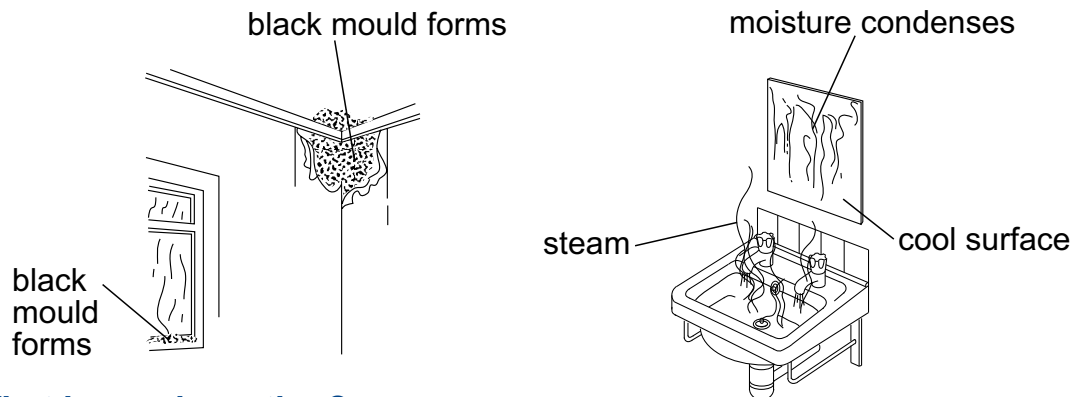
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Handy hints

Condensation

Condensation can occur in any home. You can take steps to prevent it.



What is condensation?

- It starts as moisture that is produced by cooking, washing or drying clothes indoors on radiators.
- This moist air condenses on cool surfaces such as walls, mirrors, wall tiles and windows, and even some clothes.
- When the moist air is warm it rises and often ends up on ceilings and in upstairs rooms and then forms mould.

If mould forms:

- wipe the mould off immediately with water. Do **not** use washing up liquid
- apply a recommended product available from a hardware or DIY store. Always follow the instructions carefully. Do **not** use bleach.

Control excess moisture:

- close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into other colder rooms
- open the windows when cooking or washing so that steam can escape, or use an extractor fan if you have one fitted. Leave these on for a while (up to 20 minutes) after you have finished cooking or washing
- open some windows in other rooms for a while each day and open any trickle vents fitted in your window frames. This allows a change of air
- wipe down surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mould forming
- do not block air vents and allow air to circulate around furniture and in cupboards.

Produce less moisture:

- dry clothes outdoors whenever possible, otherwise use well ventilated rooms
- cover fish tanks and remember houseplants and pets also produce moisture
- cover pans when cooking
- vent any tumble driers to the outside.

Keep your house warm:

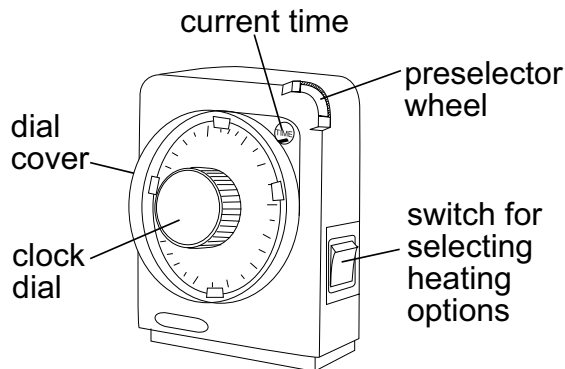
- take steps to prevent heat loss
- maintain low background heat when the weather is cold or wet. This doesn't necessarily cost more than switching it on and off.

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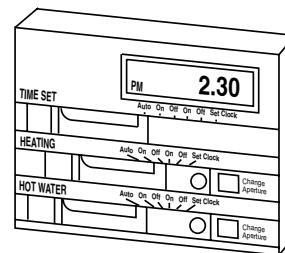
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Handy hints

Programming your heating



timeclock programmer



digital programmer

General advice

- A timeclock or digital programmer automatically turns the heating and hot water on and off at the times you set. You can set them to come on once, twice or stay on all the time, as you require.
- Set the heating to go off during the night and when the home is empty during the day.
- During freezing spells, keep some background heat on all the time.
- A room thermostat controls the heating to keep the room at a set temperature. Turn the dial so that the arrow or marker is against the temperature setting you want. A comfortable and economic temperature is between 18°C and 21°C.

Timeclock programmer

- Remove the dial cover by twisting it slightly to the left.
- Check the clock. The correct time should show against the TIME mark.
- Set the times when you want the heating and hot water to come on and go off:
 - hold the dial firmly so that it doesn't move
 - slide the 'on' arrows (usually red and marked A+C) and the 'off' arrows (usually blue and marked B+D) around to the times when you want the heating to go on and off.
- Check the switch at the side for the heating option you want: hot water only, or heating and hot water together.
- You can override the automatic setting by using the preselector wheel:
 - **on until D** will keep it on all day until it reaches D
 - **off until A** will keep it off all day until the next day.

Digital programmer

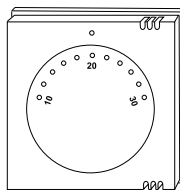
- Check the clock is showing the correct time. If not, put the timer switch to 'clock' and adjust the time using the 'forward' and 'reverse' buttons.
- Set the switch to 'on' and 'off' in turn adjusting the times when you want the heating to come on and go off.
- Reset the timer switch to 'auto' and double check the settings on display.
- You can override the automatic setting:
 - use 'on' to override the set starting time
 - use 'off' to override the set finishing time.

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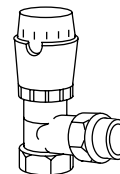
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Handy hints

Adjusting heating temperatures



room thermostat



**thermostatic
radiator valve**

The room thermostat

This controls the general temperature of your home. It is usually on the wall in your hall or in a cool part of the home. A normal comfortable temperature is between 18°C and 21°C.

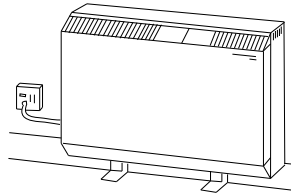
Once you have set a temperature, the thermostat checks the temperature in the air around it. If the temperature falls below the set temperature, it switches the heating on to bring the house temperature back up. If the temperature rises above the set temperature, it switches the heating off until the house temperature drops to the set temperature again.

Remember

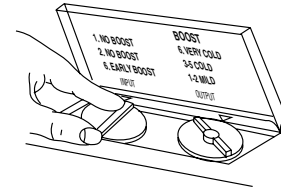
- The higher you set the temperature, the more fuel you use.
- In cold weather it is more economic to keep a low heat on all the time.

Thermostatic radiator valve

This allows you to adjust the temperature in a particular room.



electric storage heater



storage heater controls

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How storage heaters work

- You will have a heater in each of the main rooms in your home. You can adjust each heater to suit your needs for the room it is in. You can also set it to have an extra boost of heat in the afternoon or evening. There may also be a fan boost switch on the side of the heater.
- The heaters use electricity at night when it costs less.
- The heat is released during the day and cools off at night.
- When you change the setting for a heater, it does not happen immediately. It will take 24 hours to come into effect. So you need to think ahead.
- Most of the heat comes from the whole surface of the heater but there is also a grille at the top of the heater where any 'boost' heat comes from.

How to set the heating level in a storage heater

There are two controls on the top of the heater under a hinged cover.

- OUTPUT sets when the heat is released. It can be the same all day (gradually cooling off in the afternoon or evening) or you can set it to have a boost in the second half of the day.
- INPUT controls the level of heat. It controls the amount of heat you need to build up in the heater overnight depending on what temperature you want and whether you want it to have a boost later in the day.

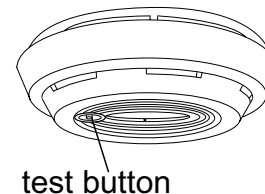
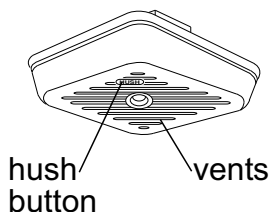
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Handy hints

About your smoke detector

All smoke detectors provided by the Council are mains-wired (not battery-charged).



smoke detectors

If the alarm goes off

- Take your family to where it is easy to escape in case there is a fire.
- Check all rooms for signs of smoke.
- Feel around each door before opening it. If there is any sign of heat, smoke or noise, **don't open the door**.

If a fire has broken out:

- **do not attempt to tackle it yourself.** Smoke and fumes can kill in minutes
- **get everyone out** of the house and **call** the fire service (**999 or 112**) unless you live in a scheme where there is a 'stay put' procedure
- **don't go back** for any reason.

If there is no sign of smoke or fire

Something may have caused it to operate in error and you may need to reset it.

This can happen if:

- a heater or clothes drier is too near it
- someone smokes a cigarette or pipe near it or an aerosol spray is used near it
- there are excessive cooking fumes or steam, eg: roasting meat or burnt toast
- there are strong draughts from nearby doors or windows
- the back-up battery (if any) is low.

If you can't find out why it has gone off, contact your housing team.

Never disconnect the alarm. This will put you and your family at risk.

To reset the alarm:

- if it has a HUSH button, press the button. The alarm will stop for 10 seconds, but it then beeps every 40 seconds. If the problem does not clear after 10 minutes the alarm will continue
- if there is no HUSH button, turn off the electricity supply at the consumer unit for at least 15 minutes. Then switch the electricity back on.

To test your alarm:

- press and hold the test button for a few seconds. The alarm should sound
- if the alarm does not sound, try cleaning it and test again
- if the alarm still does not sound when tested after cleaning, contact your housing team.

To clean your alarm:

- use the nozzle of your vacuum cleaner to remove any dust from the vents.