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Helpful tips for running and maintaining your home

This document is intended to help you learn useful skills, teach you how to run a house and demonstrate what you should do in certain scenarios.

PLEASE READ THIS WHOLE DOCUMENT. AFTER READING IT, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO TACKLE SOME HOUSEHOLD ISSUES YOURSELF.

Report It!

Throughout your tenancy, you may have to report maintenance to us.

Head to our website and click 'Book Maintenance'.

This will take you through a step-by-step system designed to get as much information about the problem as possible.

Include as much detail as possible, you can also add photos. This function is also available on your smartphone, so you do not need a computer to report repairs.

All maintenance requests must be sent through our website.

The more information we have the quicker we may be able to fix the problem.

Priorities?

There are different types of maintenance requests and we have categorised them into 'Priorities'

PRIORITY 1 - EMERGENCY REPAIRS

These are classed as emergencies and are potentially life-threatening.

Usually, the first port of call is to call the emergency services or our emergency phone number immediately.

Issues classified as Priority 1 are:

- Burglary- call 999
- Gas leaks- 0800 111 999
- Fire- call 999
- Flooding caused by Force Majeure events (Call your local office)
- Significant water leaks from ceiling/roof (Call your local office)
- Structural damage e.g full holes in ceilings, windows, walls (Call your local office)
- The only toilet in the house not working/broken (Call your local office)

PRIORITY 2 - URGENT REPAIRS

These are repairs that are not life - threatening but cause significant inconvenience.

Resolve these by logging a maintenance request through our website

Some issues classified as Priority 2 are:

- White goods appliance repairs
- Blocked toilet (with the use of another one)
- Loss of hot water
- Loss of heating
- Blocked drains
- Pest issues
- Shower/bath leaks (stop using them until we visit)
- Electricity failure

PRIORITY 3 - NON-URGENT REPAIRS

These are repairs that do not significantly affect your standard of living but need repairing.

Resolve these by logging a maintenance request through our website

Some issues classified as Priority 3 are:

- Cosmetic issues
- Painting
- Curtains/blinds
- Furniture broken
- Laundry machines faulty
- Garden maintenance
- Condensation (see our guide to damp and condensation)

Is it an Emergency?

Please consider carefully what an emergency is and isn't, there are costly charges for call-outs and if they aren't considered emergencies, you may be charged for the call out.

Something will inevitably go wrong with the house throughout the year, but we ask you to give some thought as to whether it is a genuine emergency or whether it is just an inconvenience where you could wait until the next working day.

If your power goes off, for example, check the fuse board and check the street to see if it isn't just your house affected.

If your toilet or drains get blocked, attempt to unblock it yourself. There are many cheap, common household products available that can help, much cheaper than a potential call-out charge. You can Google tips and tricks to unblock or see our drains section.

Fire?

- Leave the room where the fire is straight away, then close the door.
- Tell everyone in your home to leave. Close the front door behind you.
- Do not stay behind to put the fire out.
- Call the fire service on 999. Then call our emergency number.
- Wait outside, away from the building.

YOU CAN PREVENT FIRE FROM HAPPENING BY TAKING A FEW SIMPLE STEPS:

- Do not smoke anywhere in your property.
- Do not leave cooking unattended.
- Be especially vigilant when cooking with oil.
- Do not overload electrical sockets.
- Turn off appliances when not in use. Do not even leave them on standby.
- The use of candles is strictly prohibited.

N.B You should make yourself familiar with all fire escape routes in the property when you move in.

Heating Issues?

Your first port of call will be to check if the radiator thermostats are turned off. If they are, please turn them on.

Please regularly check your boiler pressure, this should be anywhere between 1 and 2 for good heating.

Your pressure gauge may look like this and be on the face of or underneath your boiler:

If it is low, please watch the following videos on how to top up different types of boilers:

How to top up a combi boiler:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbAyo2FJ10s>

How to top up a sealed system boiler:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bh3TX8dq5EI>

If your pressure drops again quickly, there may be a leak in the system which requires the attention of a plumber. Please Book Maintenance online.



If you can smell gas, leave the house (**DO NOT TURN ANY LIGHTS ON OR OFF**) and call Northern Gas on 0800 111 999

If your radiator is hot at the bottom but cold at the top, it will need bleeding. Please ensure your boiler is topped up and turn your it off before carrying out the next steps.

Using a flathead screwdriver, find the valve at the top of the radiator. Turn the valve and you will hear hissing air. As soon as the water comes out, turn the valve back to its original position and your radiator should start to heat up.

It may be worth holding a towel underneath the valve to absorb any water that may come out.

Please repressurise your boiler after if necessary.

N.B If your house is electric only, this does not apply.

Electrical Issues?

If your electric has gone off, this is usually due to an appliance tripping the electrics. If you have plugged an appliance in and the electrics go off, it is usually because the appliance is faulty.

To test this:

1. Unplug all appliances (kettles / washing machines / Fridges etc)
2. Go to your fuse board. It should look like this:



The label beneath the tripped switch will indicate which electrical system is tripping the electrics. This will help identify what is tripping the electrics and what not to use until the problem has been resolved.

3. All switches should be pointed **UP** unless it is a spare, in which it will be annotated underneath.
4. If a switch is pointed down, flick it back up.
5. Go back to the appliance and plug back in. If the electrics trip again, please unplug appliance and repeat steps 1-4.

If it is your own appliance which is causing the electrics to trip, please do not use this again as it will need replacing.

If it is one of our appliances, please report this online and we will replace this for you.

If your power is off and your fuse board looks fine, check the National Grid website. This will tell you if there is a power cut in the area.

Carbon Monoxide alarm beeping?

Your Carbon Monoxide alarm will look like this:



It will be located near your boiler or your gas hob, if it starts to sound, open the windows in which it is located immediately, leave the house, call the Northern Gas emergency line 0800 111 999, then call your local office.

Leak?

Don't panic!

Place a bucket under the leak and call your local office

If it is not in the room below the roof, this may be a plumbing issue. If the leak occurred after using a shower, bath, sink etc, please stop using these, locate your stop-tap and turn your water off and we will send a plumber.

If it is below the roof, it is likely to be a roofing issue. We will send a roofer out but please note they do not work when it is raining for health and safety reasons.

Drain Blocked?

Please remember that from the start of your tenancy you are responsible for the drainage of the property.

Do not put food or cooking oil down the sink as this will block the sink.

If you do block it, please use a plunger to try to unblock it. If this fails, purchase drain unblocker from any supermarket but please ensure you follow instructions on the bottle as it is very harmful.

Covering all drains in the room will help create an airlock, causing the blockage to be shifted more easily.

If we attend to unblock, there will be a charge for this.

Please note you are also responsible for all external drainage of the property.

N.B If you use a chemical drain blocker and are unsuccessful in unblocking your drain, please advise us as we will need to pass this information onto the plumber

Toilet Blocked?

Cover all plugs in the bathroom using tape etc and plunge the toilet. Pouring a bucket of water down the bowl may help too!

Please limit the amount of toilet roll that goes down and make sure that sanitary products are binned.

If we attend to unblock it and it is not found to be fair wear and tear, there will be a charge for this.

No Water?

Your first port of call should be to check your stopcock. This is the main water shut-off for your house. It is usually located underneath your sink (This may vary from house to house) and looks like a tap. Check that it turned all the way to the left (anti-clockwise) and check your water again.

If this does not help, there may be a more widespread issue. Please check your local waterboard website for any outages in the area.

Lighting Issues?

It is your responsibility to change bayonet and screw-in light bulbs.

We understand that not all light fittings can be changed by yourselves. If this is the case and the light fitting needs tool, you would only be charged for the bulb.

Please report any broken bulbs that aren't screw in or bayonet and we will replace these.

Hygiene and Cleanliness

Please keep your property in a clean and hygienic condition. This includes keeping your rubbish in bins with tight lids; sealing rubbish bags properly when taking them to the communal bin area; keeping floors clean by mopping up spills immediately; washing dishes promptly; keeping work surfaces clean and clutter-free; storing food in sealed containers. Please also take extra care in always keeping corridors rubbish free.

A tidy house not only looks better but improves mental and physical wellbeing. Old food left on floors and counters can attract vermin.

Cleaning Hacks!

VINEGAR

Cheap as chips, vinegar has a multitude of uses around the home. White vinegar is the cheapest option – leave the balsamic for your salad!

1. Clean bathrooms and metal fixtures!

- Fill a spray bottle with white vinegar and water.
- Use it to clean chrome and stainless-steel fixtures.
- Remove scum, mildew and grime from bathtubs or showers!

2. Clean the inside of your microwave!

- Add a ¼ cup of vinegar to a cup of water in a microwavable bowl.
- Heat on high until boiling.
- Remove the bowl.
- Immediately wipe the interior clean.

3. Disinfect your kitchen chopping boards!

- Give them a thorough wipe with a cloth soaked in vinegar!

4. Make your cups and mugs pristine again!

- Fill them with a splash of vinegar topped with hot water.
- Leave them to soak for an hour then wash as usual.
- The tea and coffee stains should wipe away easily

BICARBONATE OF SODA

Bicarbonate of soda, known across the pond as baking soda, is good for more than just adding rise to your baking.

1. Keep your fridge smelling fresh!

- Keep an open container of it in your fridge to keep it smelling fresh!

2. Get rid of lingering smells in your containers!

- Rinse out plastic containers with a pinch of bicarb and hot water.
- For stubborn smells, let the container soak overnight before rinsing!

3. Restore shine to your silver!

- Make a paste of three parts bicarbonate to one part water.
- Rub the silver with the paste.
- Rinse with warm water.
- Dry with a soft cloth.

(This same paste can be used to treat stubborn stains in the bathroom apply to the offending spot, let it stand, then wipe clean.)

Don't use an abrasive surface to take it off to avoid scratches.

4. Get rid of burnt food from your pots and pans!

- Sprinkle with bicarbonate of soda.
- Splash with hot water.
- Leave overnight and the food should fall away!

5. Prevent/unblock clogged drains in your kitchen/bathroom!

- Pour a cup of bicarbonate down the drain.
- Rinse with hot water.
- If it's blocked, add a cup of vinegar and rinse!
- Repeat every week!

6. Keep carpets smelling fresh!

- Sprinkle bicarbonate of soda on the carpet.
- Allow it to sit for 15 minutes.
- Finish off with a vacuum for fresh carpets!

LEMONS

This superstar citrus fruit is great for all sorts of cleaning tasks around the home and leaves a refreshing aroma behind.

1. Treat limescale in your kettle/coffee machine!

- Put in a few slices of lemon and set to the boil.
- Once boiled, allow the mixture to sit for an hour or two before rinsing and drying.

2. Get your shower doors sparkling again!

- Rub them with half a lemon then rinse with hot water.
- This should remove hard water marks!

3. Lemon juice and water spray bottle!

- Find an empty spray bottle and mix lemon juice and water in it.
- Use it to spray counters, windows and mirrors, sinks and work surfaces.
- The lemon will disinfect naturally and remove any limescale on metal surfaces!

4. Clean your microwave!

(You might want to share this one with that housemate who's always exploding food in the microwave!)

- Cut a lemon in half.
- Squeeze juice into a small bowl of water.
- Add both lemon halves to the bowl.
- Place in the microwave for five minutes.
- The fresh scent eliminates cooking odours, and condensation from the steam loosens random splatters that have hardened!
- Wipe away the loose stains with a damp cloth!

5. Silicone mould!

If regular cleaning of your shower and bath silicone is not kept on top of, silicon mould may form. It can be tricky to clean so the following steps will help

- Using kitchen roll, roll the paper into a string and lay along the silicone.
- Wearing gloves, pour bathroom bleach onto the kitchen roll and pack into the silicone.
- Wait 3 hours.
- Remove and dispose of toilet roll and scrub the silicone.
- Rinse.

Failing this, the areas may need resealing which may be your own cost.

Viewings

Please remember that you too were once a prospective tenant and viewings do need to occur in your house, and unfortunately several may be needed.

By being hospitable and helpful, you may be able to speed the process up! We understand that the Letting season can be frustrating for you as many groups may be in and out of your house. It will improve the "let-ability" of your house by keeping it clean, therefore reducing the number of visits we have.

Unfortunately, some groups do not turn up and this cannot be helped, so we apologise in advance if we give you notice and do not attend.

During this time, prospective tenants may knock on your door unannounced without making an official booking through us. You can refuse access in this instance.

Your Neighbourhood

Local residents welcome good tenants and it's important that you get on with your neighbours. Whoever they are, please be mindful of their lifestyle. By getting on with neighbours you can look out for each other, especially keeping an eye on your property during holidays. Please avoid activities that cause a nuisance or disturbance to your neighbours. For example, playing loud music, vandalism, dumping rubbish or drunken behaviour. Please avoid excessive noise after 10pm.

N.B If you are going to have a party, it may be worth letting your neighbours know. This will keep good relations.

Problems with condensation

As the weather turns cold, condensation and mould can form more easily. If there are signs of condensation at your property, it's not usually a defect with the property itself but the result of the way the tenants are using the property. It's important that tenants take immediate action to prevent further damage and the cost of subsequent repairs which you will be charged for.

Please follow the advice below and feel free to seek further advice from our maintenance team or office staff.

What is condensation?

There is always moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If air gets cold, it cannot hold all the moisture produced by everyday activities and some of the moisture appears as tiny droplets of water, most noticeable on windows on a cold morning. This is condensation. It can also be seen on mirrors when you have a shower and on cold surfaces such as tiles or cold walls and ceilings.

Preventing condensation

- Please dry clothes outdoors or in the tumble dryer provided.
- Keep rooms clutter free. Don't keep bundles of clothes piled up in one place as this will prevent circulation. Please try to keep all furniture at least 5cm away from external walls.
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed when cooking and washing. Use extractor fans if you have them. Make sure wall and window vents are always open.
- At first sign of condensation wipe down the affected area immediately with a bleached cloth.
- Open doors to ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and don't overfill them.
- Open the window in the affected room a little, especially if it is misted up.
- Keep your home well ventilated to allow moist air to escape and fresh air to be sucked in.

Please note that if this advice is not followed and maintenance work, due to condensation, occurs at the property then you will need to be charged for this. This advice is particularly important if you reside in a basement bedroom.

Pests!

Nobody likes finding mice in the house, but they (along with other pests) are attracted to warm environments where lots of food can be found. By keeping your house free of food waste and keeping on top of your bin disposal, you can minimise the chance of seeing a pest in your home!

See below what pests you're likely to find month by month

January Rats and Mice	February Nesting birds and insects such as ants	March Nesting birds and moths
April Rats, mice, cockroaches, ants, bees and wasps	May Wasps, bees and flies. Also, cockroaches, ants, mice and roaches in moderate numbers	June Bed bugs, fleas, cockroaches, flies, ants, bees and wasps.
July Bed bugs, fleas, cockroaches, flies, ants, bees and wasps	August Wasps and ants	September Wasps and spiders
October Wasps, rats and mice	November Spiders, Mice, Birds and rats	December Rats, mice and cockroaches

If you believe that you have a pest issue, please report this to us online but please remember most of these issues are out of our control.

What to do in a storm

Please keep all doors and windows shut as they can be ripped from the building.

If a leak occurs, please contain it as best as possible. We will not be able to fix the leak (if it is a roof leak) until the storm clears. Roofers are usually at their busiest after storms so there may be a small wait until we can sort this. We will try to make stop-gap repairs in the mean time.

Your garden fence may come down. After storms, fencers are also usually at their busiest so please bear with us until we can arrange a date.

Household waste

Information on your bin collection day can be found on the your local council website.

Bin it right

A guide to what you can put in your recycling bin and box

Recycling Bin

Wash and squash plastic bottles and replace lids (except pump). Metal only lids and caps can also be recycled in your bin. Place all clean, dry items loose in to your bin. Do not bag!

Plastic pots, tubs, trays and bottles

Cartons, cans, aerosols and foil

Paper and cardboard

Recycling Box

Glass bottles and jars

No Thanks

- X Black bags / liners / black plastic
- X Carrier bags / bags for life
- X Food
- X Nappies
- X Clothes / shoes / textiles
- X Plastic bags / wrapping / film
- X Crisp packets / sweet and biscuit wrappers
- X Kitchen roll / tissues / wipes
- X Scrap metal / wood / electricals
- X Batteries / Light bulbs
- X Polystyrene / bubble wrap

Reducing your household waste

Tips on reducing your household waste can be found here. This will reduce strain on your bins.

We operate a Fair Energy Usage Policy to prevent energy being wasted.

Please refer to your contract to find more information on this.

Energy saving policy

Below are some helpful tips you can follow to live an eco-friendly lifestyle in your loc8me Home:

- Use eco-friendly cleaning products
- Wash clothes on a lower temperature
- Avoid single use plastics
- Buy reusable straws
- Encourage the mantra "Reduce, reuse, recycle"
- Unplug/turn off appliances when they are not in use.
- Turn heating off when you do not use it- try warmer clothes first!
- Close windows when heating is on

One household may not be able to make much of an environmental difference, but if we can encourage all our houses to make eco-friendly choices- the difference may come!

These tips are not only helping the environment, but they may also save you money.

It costs the average UK household £80 a year to leave appliances on standby!