



# Section 9: Caring for your home

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Partnership • Respect • Pride  
Excellent services for you and your community



## 9. Caring for your home

### Gas and electrical servicing

You have a responsibility to make sure that your gas appliances, flue and pipes are serviced and maintained regularly. You should arrange for your gas appliances to be serviced annually to make sure that they work properly and to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. You can't smell or see carbon monoxide but it is dangerous and can kill. As a responsible landlord, your safety and wellbeing is our top priority so we are offering all tenants and leaseholders a free carbon monoxide detector if you would like one – please contact our Customer Services Team on 01494 476100. We recommend that your gas servicing is done by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

If you notice a gas leak on your property, call National Grid immediately on 0800 111 999. National Grid is an organisation responsible for transporting and distributing gas to your door. You can get them at any time of the day or night and they will advise you on what to do.

You also have a responsibility to have your electrics and appliances regularly tested for safety.



### Fire and smoke

Make sure that you know where the fire escape routes are in the building. If you notice any obstructions blocking the escape route, if possible remove them, or report them immediately to your Estate Warden or our Customer Service Team. Don't leave self-closing fire doors wedged open or remove the locking devices. We'd recommend that you have smoke alarms fitted in your property and that you change the batteries regularly. If your smoke alarm disturbs you, don't be tempted to remove the batteries, as you may not be able to put them back before an incident happens. You can buy smoke alarms cheaply from most grocery stores and if you are aged 60 and over or disabled, you may be able to get help towards the purchase. More information about this is available from your local authority.

If you see fire or smoke in your home:

- don't try to put it out unless you can do so safely and quickly without causing unnecessary risk or injury to yourself and others
- close all doors and windows to prevent the smoke spreading and being fuelled by wind
- leave your home immediately, making sure that no one is left inside
- call the emergency services on 999 for help, telling them the location of the fire.



If you notice smoke or fire in another home, contact the emergency services on 999 immediately. Do not put yourself at unnecessary risk. It may be safer to stay in your home unless advised otherwise by the Fire Service. If the fire is in the communal areas of the building, raise an alarm, leave the building immediately, call the Fire Service and follow their advice.

### Water

It's useful to know where the water stopcock is located in your home. This will make it easier if you have to turn off the stopcock in an emergency. If you are going to be away from your home for a long period, make sure that you turn off the stopcock before you leave to prevent flooding and damage to your home or that of other residents.

Remember to check your pipes, water tank and appliances such as the washing machine regularly. In cold weather, covering areas of your pipes that are exposed with a material such as foam could prevent your pipes from bursting. Remember to take out plugs to allow water to flow freely down the drains.

If you have a flood, call a plumber immediately and try to collect escaped water with buckets. If you get flooded, you may be able to claim on the buildings insurance if the damage is structural. If your personal belongings or contents of your home are damaged, you will need to claim on your contents insurance.



### Laminate flooring

If you want to put down laminate or wood flooring, you need to ask for our permission, so please write to the Commercial Team. Generally, permission is given except where you live in a flat or maisonette. If you install such flooring without permission, you will be asked to remove it at your own cost. Where permission is granted, the flooring must be laid to best practice standard. Things to consider:

- By replacing carpets or soft flooring with laminate, hard wood floor or ceramic tiles, it can result in more impact noise travelling through the floor. Dropped items, footsteps, chairs and furniture scraping across the surface are sources of impact noise
- This noise can travel straight through the floor to the neighbours below, or can travel to the party wall into adjoining neighbours homes, causing distress and annoyance to neighbours
- If a hard surface floor is fitted and noise from normal living is found to be excessive or unreasonable, action under your lease will be taken
- Where there is tension between neighbours we can offer both parties mediation to help resolve the problem and improve neighbour relations
- If you live in a flat that does not have any property below, this type of flooring does not usually cause a problem.



If you need advice on dealing with such noise problems, please speak to the Commercial Team by calling 01494 476100.

### Condensation

Condensation happens when there is too much water collection in the air and this can cause damage, such as wood rot. Condensation happens when cold and warm air mix. It's usually near the windows, in bathrooms and cupboards and the damage it causes can be expensive to treat.

To reduce condensation:

- heat your property sufficiently in order to dry it out
- after having a bath, open the bathroom window and close the door to prevent steam escaping into other parts of your home
- use extractor fans if you have them
- dry clothes outside of your home, or leave a window open if using a radiator so that the moisture can escape
- run the cold water before the hot when having a bath
- move large item such as wardrobes away from walls
- use a dehumidifier if you have one.



### Energy efficiency

Energy efficiency is about making sure the energy that goes into heating, lighting and providing power in your home is not wasted. Energy costs us all money, so we want you to make sure that you're not wasting it – energy and money!

Being energy efficient means using common sense to reduce the amount of fuel you use. At the same time, you can make your home more comfortable and the bills more affordable. Here are just some of the ways you can make savings:

- Use energy-efficient light bulbs
- Don't leave hot water running - use a plug in your basin or sink
- Have showers, rather than baths - they use less water
- When using the kettle, only boil as much water as you need
- If you have a hot water thermostat, set it at 60C
- Turn down your central heating by just one degree
- Wait until you have a full load to use your washing machine
- Turn off any unnecessary lights.

For more information about energy efficiency, please call your energy supplier.



### **Pest control**

If you experience problems with pests such as rodents and insects, it is your responsibility to deal with these. You may need to contact the pest control team at Wycombe District Council who will advise you what to do. You may get a free service for rat and cockroach infestations but for others such as mice and fleas, there may be a charge.

Some of the steps you can take to prevent problems with pest before they happen include:

- cleaning your cupboards regularly
- cleaning up food from your floor
- making sure your home is clean
- keeping scraps of food well wrapped and stored away if still needed, if not, throw them away
- covering your bin and not letting it overflow
- if you have pets, keeping them clean and well looked after.



### **Burglary and bogus callers**

Make sure that you know the identity of people that you let into your home and if you are unsure, the best approach is not to let them in until you check and are satisfied that they are who they say they are.

Our staff and contractors will always provide identification when they call at your home.

If you are in any doubt, please call us on 01494 476100 before letting them in. You can get good advice on home security from the crime prevention unit of your local Police station.