

Looking after and Maintaining your home.

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Helpful tips for looking after and maintaining your home.

PLEASE READ THROUGH AND AFTER READING IT, YOU MAY BE ABLE TO TACKLE SOME SIMPLE HOUSEHOLD ISSUES/PROBLEMS YOURSELF.

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

In each of your houses you will find a 'Repairs Policy' information sheet which gives you contact details on how to report problems or issues that can occur.

Hopefully the below details will help with some basic maintenance but if you do need to contact us, please include as much detail as possible, and also add some photos to help with the explanation. The more information we have the easier it will be to diagnose the problem.

There are different types of maintenance requests.

EMERGENCY CALLS

Emergencies are those that are potentially life-threatening.

Usually, the first port of call is to call the emergency services or our Mobile Contact Details as soon as possible (on the repairs Policy Information Sheet).

Issues classified as Priority 1 are:

- Burglary- call 999
- Gas leaks- 0800 111 999
- Fire- call 999
- Flooding caused by Force Majeure events (Call Mobile contact details)
- Significant water leaks from ceiling/roof (Call Mobile contact details)
- Structural damage e.g. full holes in ceilings, windows, walls (Call Mobile contact details)
- There are no toilets in the house that are working. (Call Mobile contact details)

URGENT REPAIRS

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

Please contact the email address or mobile number provided on the repairs policy information sheet.

Examples may include:

- White goods appliance repairs (e.g. Cooking appliance)
- 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

NON-URGENT REPAIRS

These are repairs or maintenance that does not significantly affect your standard of living but need repairing.

Please contact the email address or mobile number provided on the repairs policy information sheet.

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Examples may include:

- Cosmetic issues (Wardrobe door come off hinges or drawers come off runner)
- Painting
- Curtains/blinds
- Furniture broken
- Laundry machines faulty
- Garden maintenance
- Condensation (see below guide to damp and condensation)

Is it an Emergency?

Please consider carefully what an emergency is and isn't, there can be 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.

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 mobile number.
- Wait outside, away from the building.

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

- Smoking is strictly forbidden in our properties. **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 problems?

First you should make sure the heating is programmed to be on at that time and check if the radiator thermostats are turned off.

If they are, please turn them on and they should start to warm up over the next 5 or so minutes.

Please regularly check your boiler pressure, this should be anywhere between 1 and 1.5 for good heating.

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

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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 heating engineer. Please contact us as outlined in the repairs policy.

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 you have any doubts, or you need any assistance please call us on the mobile number on the repairs policy sheet.

Electrical Problems?

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. **VERY IMPORTANT** - **Unplug all appliances (kettles / washing machines / Fridges etc) particularly unplugging or switching off whatever it was that you were using when the circuits tripped.**
2. Go to your fuse board. It should look something like this:



There will be a tripped switch (switch flicked down) that will indicate it has been tripped.

3. All switches should be pointed UP unless it is a spare, in which it will be annotated underneath.
4. (After doing step 1) If a switch is pointed down, flick it back up.
5. Go back to the appliance and plug back in and switch it on. If the electrics trip again, please unplug appliance, do not use it, and repeat steps 1-4.

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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 to us and we will replace or repair it.

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 sounding?

Your carbon monoxide sensor alarm will look like one of these:



It will be located near your boiler or your gas hob, if it starts to sound and the alarm light illuminates, open the windows in which it is located immediately, leave the house, then call us on the mobile number on the repairs policy sheet. Don't return to the house until you have spoken with us.

Regular Checks & Maintenance?

Smoke & CO Detectors

Your house has been fitted with linked smoke, heat and CO detectors.

We do test them every year but in addition to this you will need to do regular checks of these yourself to ensure they are still working.

To do this you should first check each of the detectors in all locations fitted and ensure they have illuminated power lights on them all. (Small LED light next to power label)

You can then either press the test button in-built to any of the units for at least 5 seconds and this should set all of the linked alarms sounding. (Make sure everyone in the house is aware you are testing.) Please note that all sensors will sound including the CO sensor as they are all linked.

The other option (If fitted) is to locate the Alarm Controller (Shown below) and simply press the test button on this for 5 seconds.



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Regular Checks & Maintenance?

Taps & Showers.

Where showers are fitted -

If they are used only occasionally then flush them through by running them for at least two minutes every week. Keep out of the way whilst this is being done as far as possible.

Clean, descale and disinfect the showerhead regularly. This should be done at least quarterly.

Leaving the property unoccupied -

Where a property is left unoccupied, for example because of a holiday or visiting family outside of term time, both hot and cold-water systems need to be flushed before using them again. This should be done by running all outlets for at least 2 minutes.

Leak?

Please don't panic!

Place a bucket or container under the leak and call us on the mobile number on the repairs policy sheet.

If it is not in the room below the roof, this is most likely a plumbing issue. If the leak occurred after using a shower, bath, sink etc, and it stops after using them then please stop using these until it has been fixed.

If the leak continues, then 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.

If we attend to unblock where the problem has been caused by you, 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

If you have any doubts, or you need any assistance please call us on the mobile number on the repairs policy sheet.

Blocked Toilet?

Please limit the amount of toilet roll that goes down and make sure that sanitary products are binned not flushed.

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

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No water?

Please check your Northumbria waterboard website for any outages in the area.

<https://www.nwl.co.uk>

Lighting Issues?

It is your responsibility to change the simpler 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.

Keeping your House clean & Fresh!

Please keep your property in a clean and hygienic condition. This includes keeping your rubbish in bins with tight lids; 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.

Tenant 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 are free to refuse access if it is not convenient for you.

Your Neighbours and 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.

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 10.30pm.

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

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Condensation and the problems it can cause!

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 may be charged for.

Please follow the advice below and feel free to seek further advice from us.

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

- Where possible please dry clothes outdoors or if needed in the tumble dryer provided.
- If you do use indoor drying racks make sure the room is well ventilated.
- 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 may be charged for this.

If you have any doubts, or you need any assistance please call us on the mobile number on the repairs policy sheet.

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

If you believe that you have a pest issue, please email us, or call us on the details given on the repairs policy sheet.

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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

Stormy Weather

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 meantime.

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.

Energy Usage.

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

- Use eco-friendly cleaning products
- Wash clothes on a lower temperature
- Avoid single use plastics
- 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 is estimated that the average UK household can save £100 a year by turning appliances off rather than leaving them on standby!