



# Repairs and Maintenance Handbook

Our guide to your repairs service



## Introduction

This repairs and maintenance handbook tells you about the standard of service you can expect from the Council and gives you a range of helpful information. It has been produced in consultation with Tenant representatives.

We hope you will find this handbook useful and that you will refer to it when you report repairs. It will help you to give all the necessary information to the Repairs Coordinator when you call us.



**Please keep this handbook in a safe place where you can easily find it when you need a repair**

# Contents

	<u>Page</u>
<b><u>How to report a repair</u></b> .....	5
<u>Online</u> .....	5
<u>By Phone</u> .....	6
<u>Emergencies outside office hours</u> .....	6
<b><u>What happens when you report a repair?</u></b> .....	7
<b><u>Who is responsible for the repair?</u></b> .....	8
<u>Detailed list of repair responsibilities</u> .....	8
<b><u>How quickly will the repair be done?</u></b> .....	18
<u>Repair priorities and timescales</u> .....	18
<b><u>Who will do the repair?</u></b> .....	19
<b><u>Repairs and Right-to-Buy</u></b> .....	19
<b><u>Right to repair scheme</u></b> .....	20
<b><u>Repairs we charge for</u></b> .....	21
<u>Rechargeable repairs</u> .....	21
<u>Recharge for gaining access to carry out the annual gas safety check</u> .....	22

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<a href="#"><u>Work we may charge you for when you move out</u></a> .....	22
<a href="#"><u>Surveyor inspections</u></a> .....	23
<a href="#"><u>Planned maintenance and improvements</u></a> .....	24
<a href="#"><u>Gas safety</u></a> .....	26
<a href="#"><u>Gas servicing and annual safety check</u></a> .....	26
<a href="#"><u>Gas leaks</u></a> .....	27
<a href="#"><u>Carrying out your own improvements and alterations</u></a> .....	28
<a href="#"><u>Right to compensation for improvements</u></a> .....	29
<a href="#"><u>Mutual exchange</u></a> .....	29
<a href="#"><u>Helpful information</u></a> .....	30
<a href="#"><u>Clearing a blocked waste</u></a> .....	30
<a href="#"><u>Damp/Mould caused by condensation</u></a> .....	32
<a href="#"><u>Resetting a trip switch</u></a> .....	33
<a href="#"><u>Fire safety</u></a> .....	35
<a href="#"><u>Asbestos</u></a> .....	37
<a href="#"><u>Energy saving</u></a> .....	40
<a href="#"><u>Our standards</u></a> .....	42
<a href="#"><u>Complaints, comments and compliments</u></a> .....	43

## How to report a repair

Before you contact us, please check this handbook to find out [who is responsible for the repair](#) (you or the Council) and to see [what details we need to know](#). By giving us as much information as possible, you can help us to get your problem fixed quickly.

### Online



You can use the online form on the Council's website for reporting non-emergency repairs, as follows:

- Go to the [Central Bedfordshire website](#) and click on **'Housing'**
- Then click on **'Council housing repairs'**
- This will take you to 'How to report a repair' where you can click ['report online'](#)

To report a repair, complete the online form and submit it to us. We will receive your repair and contact you to arrange an appointment to carry out the repair or, if necessary, to arrange an appointment for the Area Maintenance Surveyor to visit your home and carry out an inspection.

## By Phone



You can ring the free phone number **0800 074 0263**. A recorded voice will guide you on how to report your repairs.

**Option 1 to report gas repairs** including central heating and gas fires. This option takes you straight to our gas contractor.

NOTE: If you suspect a gas leak, please call the National Grid free on 0800 111 999.

**Option 2 to report electrical repairs.** This option takes you straight to our electrical contractor. Before reporting any electrical faults, please make sure that the fault doesn't relate directly to a faulty appliance (iron, fridge, light fitting, etc).

**Option 3 to report general repairs.** This option takes you to our dedicated call centre where our Repairs Coordinators work with our general repairs contractor.

Repairs can be reported between the following hours:

- 8:45am and 5:15pm Monday to Thursday
- 8:45am and 4:45pm on Fridays

## Emergencies outside office hours

Please call the freephone number **0800 074 0263**. If you call outside of office hours, at weekends and during national holidays, your call will be diverted to our Out of Hours service. This service is for emergency or Health & Safety repairs only. You should report all other repairs on the next working day.

## What happens when you report a repair?

When you report a repair, we will ask you for the following information:

- Your name, address and a contact phone number
- As much information as possible to help us carry out the repair effectively
- If water is leaking into your home from another property, we will need to know the address of that property as well
- A time when someone will be at home
- Anything else you think we need to take into account about your household, e.g. if you have a disability
- Whether your home has recently been repaired or refurbished, as the work may be covered by a guarantee
- If the repair relates to an adaptation for a disabled person

**When we have logged your repair, we will give you a job number and details of when the work will be carried out or inspected.**

Sometimes a Surveyor will need to look at the problem before we can order a repair and we will arrange a convenient time with you.

If you are out when we call, we will leave a card asking you to phone us to make another appointment.

If you cannot keep an appointment, please let us know, otherwise we may cancel your repair.

## Who is responsible for the repair?

It's important to remember that any improvements or alterations you have made to your home must be maintained and repaired by you.

\* Please see [page 21](#) in respect of repairs which may be recharged to you if the fault is due to misuse.

Type of Repair	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
<b>BATHROOMS</b>			
Blocked basin, bath, shower, toilet	✓		Unless caused by putting inappropriate items down the waste *
Tap will not turn off	✓		
Replacement tap	✓		
Loose fitting tap	✓		
Replace tap washer	✓		
Refix wash hand basin brackets	✓		
Refix bathroom tiles	✓		
Refix bath panel and framework	✓		
Replace, basin, bath, shower	✓		Breakages are your responsibility *
Plugs, chains and cleaning		✓	
Replace showerhead		✓	
Shower curtain		✓	
Toilet bowls	✓		
Toilet seats		✓	
Extractor fans	✓		Unless installed by you
<b>CEILINGS</b>			
Ceilings	✓		
Loft hatches	✓		



Type of Repair	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Plasterwork	✓		
<b>BOILERS &amp; CENTRAL HEATING</b>			
Repairs to boiler and pipework	✓		
Rectify central heating not working	✓		
<b>CHIMNEYS</b>			
Make safe dangerous chimney	✓		
Repair to chimney pot or cowl	✓		
Repair chimney stack	✓		
Chimney sweeping	✓		
<b>CURTAIN RAILS</b>			
Curtain rails and battens		✓	
Blinds, blind fittings and cords		✓	
<b>DECORATION</b>			
Internal decorations, including after repair and minor cracks in plaster		✓	
Plastering	✓		
Filling small holes or cracks less than 5mm wide in walls or ceilings		✓	
Decorative coatings to walls (artex)		✓	If non-asbestos – see <a href="#">pages 37 to 39</a>
External decoration	✓		
Decoration to communal (shared) areas	✓		
<b>DOORS</b>			
Make safe back or front door	✓		
Gain access		✓	
Glazing to external and internal doors		✓	

Type of Repair	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Repair or replace locks to external doors	✓		Lost keys are the tenant's responsibility
Doors into the property and their door frames	✓		If the repair is needed because of vandalism or burglary, you need to get a crime number from the Police
Porches	✓		Unless fitted by tenant
Repairs to door steps	✓		
Repairs to garage doors	✓		
External door numbers, letter boxes and plates, door knockers and bells		✓	
Repairs to internal doors	✓		Unless non standard doors fitted by tenant
Internal cupboard door handles and catches (other than kitchen units), wardrobe handles and catches		✓	
Door adjustment to fit carpets		✓	
Door entry systems (communal properties)	✓		
<b>DRAINS</b>			
Blocked drains	✓		Unless blockage has been caused by inappropriate disposals such as nappies, food waste and fat, sanitary products *
Manhole covers and frames	✓		
<b>ELECTRICS</b>			
Loss of electricity or lights	✓		Unless due to power cut

Type of Repair	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Water penetrating electrics	✓		
Dangerous or exposed wires	✓		
Electric heating	✓		
Repair or renew fuse box	✓		
Communal hallway and landing lights	✓		
Lights in garage	✓		
Electrical plugs and fuses from tenants own appliances		✓	
Smoke detectors		✓	Unless in communal area or hardwired
Electrical wiring, switches and sockets	✓		Additional sockets may be recharged
Light bulbs		✓	Unless in communal area
Strip lights		✓	On request, we will replace fluorescent strip lights, when they fail, with LED strip lights
Fuses		✓	
Resetting fuse or trip switch		✓	
Electricity supply and meter, power cuts		✓	
<b>FIREPLACES</b>			
Fire grates and other parts	✓		
Tiled surrounds	✓		
Smoke problems	✓		
<b>FLOORS</b>			
Floorboards	✓		
Floor tiles	✓		
Floor coverings		✓	Includes vinyl, carpets and laminates
Replace defective flooring	✓		

Type of Repair	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Rescreed floor	✓		
Repair/replace skirting boards	✓		
<b>GARAGES</b>			
Garage doors and locks	✓		Lost keys are the tenant's responsibility
Defective roofs	✓		
Lights in garage	✓		
<b>GARDENS AND EXTERNAL AREAS</b> (see also Garages, Outhouses and Sheds)			
Garden		✓	Except communal gardens
Paths and Driveways	✓		Except any paths and driveways you have constructed
External/garden taps		✓	
Fences bordering public roads and paths	✓		
Fences dividing gardens		✓	
Garden walls	✓		Except walls or other garden features that you have built or installed
Garden gates, gate catches and locks		✓	Unless the gate gives access to more than one property
Water butts		✓	Unless part of original rain water drainage for the property
Manhole covers and frames	✓		
Clothes lines, posts and rotary dryers		✓	Unless in communal area
Parking areas (communal)	✓		

Type of Repair	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
<b>GAS</b>			
Gas escapes – report immediately to National Grid		✓	<b>National Grid emergency number: 0800 111 999</b>
Gas cookers, connection pipes and other tenant’s appliances		✓	Work must be carried out by Gas Safe registered contractor
Central heating and water heating	✓		
Annual gas safety check	✓		
Gas fire renewal		✓	Work must be carried out by Gas Safe registered contractor
Carbon monoxide detectors	✓		If supplied by Council
<b>GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES</b>			
Clear blocked gutter	✓		
Replace broken gutter	✓		
Remake leaking gutter joints	✓		
Downpipes	✓		
Fascia boards and soffits	✓		
<b>KITCHENS</b>			
Blocked sink	✓		Unless caused by putting inappropriate items down the waste, e.g. food waste and fat *
Tap will not turn off	✓		
Replacement tap	✓		
Loose fitting tap	✓		
Replace tap washer	✓		
Repairs to sink	✓		
Refix tiles	✓		
Plugs, chains and cleaning		✓	

Type of Repair	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Gas cookers and connection pipes		✓	Work must be carried out by Gas Safe registered contractor
Electric cookers, cooker point and fitting		✓	Work must be carried out by a qualified electrician
Kitchen appliances such as fridges and dishwashers		✓	Unless in communal areas
Plumbing in and connecting your own appliances		✓	
Kitchen units	✓		Unless fitted by tenant or unless damage is caused by misuse *
Worktops	✓		Unless fitted by tenant or unless damage is caused by misuse *
Extractor fans	✓		Unless installed by you
<b>LOCKS</b>			
Gain access		✓	
Front or back door not secure	✓		
External door locks faulty	✓		
Locks external, general	✓		Lost keys are the tenant's responsibility
<b>OUTHOUSES/SHEDS</b>			
Wooden sheds		✓	
Repairs to independent structures	✓		If the structure belongs to the Council. We may remove the structure if it is deemed to be beyond economic repair and it may not be replaced.
Greenhouses		✓	

Type of Repair	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
<b>PIPES</b>			
Burst pipe - internal	✓		
Burst pipe - external	✓		
Leaking soil pipe	✓		
Loose fitting pipes	✓		
Water hammer	✓		
Refix rainwater pipe	✓		
Refix shoe to rainwater pipe	✓		
Replace sections of vent pipes	✓		
Overflow pipes	✓		
Airlocks	✓		
<b>ROOFS</b>			
Slipped tiles	✓		
Make safe after storm damage	✓		
Major roof repairs	✓		
Rain penetration	✓		
Refix or replace loose or cracked tiles or slates	✓		
Defects to garage roof	✓		
Repairs to flashings	✓		
Rebed and repoint joints to ridge tiles	✓		
<b>STAIRS AND LIFTS</b>			
Lifts not working	✓		
Repair bannister rail	✓		
Repairs to staircase	✓		
Steps to front or back doors	✓		
<b>TAPS</b>			
Tap will not turn off	✓		
Other repairs to taps	✓		
Replace tap washer	✓		

Type of Repair	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
<b>TILES</b>			
Wall, floor, fireplaces etc.	✓		
<b>TV AND TELEPHONE FITTINGS</b>			
TV aerials, satellite dishes		✓	Unless on blocks of flats with a communal aerial – <b>**please see note below.</b>
TV Socket		✓	Unless in sheltered housing
Telephone extension points and cables		✓	
<b>WALLS</b>			
Dangerous walls, make safe	✓		
External brickwork including pointing	✓		
Foundations	✓		
Damp-proof course	✓		
External rendering (rough plaster on outside of homes)	✓		
Internal plasterwork	✓		
Shelving		✓	
<b>WATER</b> (see also bathrooms, kitchens, drains, pipes, boilers, immersion heaters)			
Burst pipe – external	✓		
Burst pipe – internal	✓		
Burst tank	✓		
No water – total	✓		
Continuous overflow	✓		
Minor leaks – internal	✓		
Tap will not turn off	✓		External/garden taps are the tenant's responsibility



Type of Repair	Us	You	Notes and exceptions
Immersion heater	✓		
Rain penetration	✓		
Faulty stop cock/valve	✓		
Air locks or water hammer	✓		
Rainwater pipe	✓		
Ball valve	✓		
Insulation – cylinder/pipe	✓		
Repairs to hot and cold water tanks and pipes	✓		
<b>WINDOWS</b>			
Window fittings (including catches)	✓		
Window frames	✓		
Window sills	✓		
Broken glass		✓	Unless you have a crime reference number

*\*\* If the problem with your TV reception is found to be as a result of the TV receiver requiring tuning/adjusting, a recharge for the engineer's visit may be made – this is currently £55.00 for this event.*



## How quickly will the repair be done?

### Repair priorities and timescales

When you report a repair, we will give it a priority category depending on the type of repair and agree an appointment time with you:

#### Emergency:

- We will start the repair within 2 hours and complete or make safe within 24 hours

#### Urgent:

- We will complete the repair within 5 working days

#### Routine:

- We will complete the repair within 20 working days

#### Larger non-emergency repairs:

- We will agree a convenient time with you

Evening and Saturday morning appointments are available by request.

## Who will do the repair?

Our maintenance contractors will normally do the work. Their vehicles will display a logo showing they are working for us and their employees will carry ID cards.

For some types of work or repairs, we will use a specialist contractor, for example for repairs to or servicing of gas central heating boilers.

You should always make sure that anyone visiting your property on our behalf shows you their ID. A genuine caller will not mind you checking. If you are not sure whether a person is working for us, do not let them into your home. Please phone us on **0800 074 0263** if you have any doubts, or phone the Police on **101** if it's an emergency.

## Repairs and Right-to-Buy

If you make a right-to-buy application for your property we will only carry out emergency works to your home.

If you tell us in writing that you decide not to go ahead with your application, we will complete repairs in the usual way.

## Right-to-Repair scheme

The Right-to-Repair scheme covers certain repairs which may affect your health, safety or security. By law we must carry out these repairs within a certain time and they are known as 'qualifying repairs'. Some examples of defects covered by this scheme are:

- Total or partial loss of electric power
- Total or partial loss of water
- Total or partial loss of gas supply
- Toilet not flushing (where there is no other working toilet in the dwelling house)

If our contractor does not carry out a 'qualifying repair' within the correct guidelines, you are entitled to ask for a second contractor to carry out the work. Should the second contractor fail to carry out the work on time, you may be entitled to compensation.

Our repair priorities and timescales take account of these guidelines and our Repairs Coordinators can let you know if your repair qualifies under this scheme.



## Repairs we charge for

### Rechargeable repairs

In most circumstances, we will charge for repairs to damage caused by misuse, abuse or negligence by you, your family or visitors to your property. These are called 'rechargeable repairs'.

You could be recharged for the following:

- Deliberate damage to appliances
- Misuse of appliances
- Deliberate vandalism of property/appliances
- Accidental damage caused by your family or visitors to the property

If repair work is needed for this type of damage, it will not be carried out by our repairs contractors, unless there is a risk to Health and Safety.

If rechargeable work is carried out, we will ask you to sign a letter accepting responsibility for the cost before the work is started. We will then send you a bill when the work has been done.

If you are the victim of crime and your home has been damaged, you should report it to the Police and ask for a crime number. You must give us the crime number when you ask us to carry out repairs, or you may be charged for the repair.

We will also recharge you if we are called out to repairs which are your responsibility. Please look at the table on [pages 8 to 17](#) to check whether the repair is your responsibility.

## **Recharge for gaining access to carry out the annual gas safety check**

If you do not allow us into your home to carry out the annual gas safety check, we may have to gain access, as we have a legal responsibility to carry out this check (please see [pages 26 to 27](#)). We will recharge you for repairs to any damage caused in gaining access.

## **Work we may charge you for when you move out**

In certain circumstances we will charge you for repairs.

When you move out, you are responsible for leaving the property clean and empty of unwanted furniture and rubbish (including lofts, sheds and the garden). If you don't, we will charge you.



## Surveyor inspections

We may need to inspect your home before we can carry out certain repairs and one of our Repairs Coordinators will arrange a convenient time with you.

We can organise Surveyor appointments in the morning or in the afternoon. We will ask a Surveyor to inspect your home for complex repair issues such as structural repairs, reports of damp or where there is an on-going problem.

We have 4 Area Maintenance Surveyors who carry out these types of inspection and who look after Council properties in the different coloured areas shown on the map.



We may also ask a Surveyor to visit your property to carry out a quality control inspection after repair or maintenance work has been completed.

## Planned maintenance and improvements

We make improvements to your home through planned programmes of work which are set out in the Housing Major Works Annual Delivery Plan.

For example:

- Kitchen replacement
- Bathroom replacement
- Electrical rewiring
- Roof covering

If your home is included in a planned maintenance programme, we will:

- Write to you in advance of the work
- Provide you with contact details in case you have an enquiry about the work or want to arrange a more convenient appointment
- Agree with you what work we will be doing
- Tell you the length of time we require access to your home

If your home is included in planned maintenance, you need to:

- Contact us if you have any questions or if the appointment is not suitable.



- Allow us access to your home at the agreed appointment time to ensure that you remain in the programme of work.

We also carry out programmes of work which are repeated at regular intervals to protect health and safety and to maintain buildings and equipment in a good condition. These include items that are required by law.

For example:

- Gas appliance servicing
- Servicing and maintaining communal boilers and systems
- Lift servicing
- Testing electrical installations



## Gas safety

### Gas servicing and annual safety check

As a landlord, we are legally responsible for the safety of our tenants in relation to gas. If you have a gas installation in your home, we will check this every year. This is intended to protect you, your family and your neighbours from any potential hazards; for example, carbon monoxide gas, which doesn't smell and can't be seen but can be fatal.

By law we must:

- Repair and maintain gas pipework, flues and appliances in a safe condition. We do not maintain your own appliances, such as cookers but we do make sure they are safe to use. If they are not, we will turn them off and disconnect them for your safety.
- Ensure a yearly gas service and safety check is carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer on each appliance, pipework and flue.
- Keep a record of each gas service and safety check.

When your gas service and safety check is due, we will contact you with an appointment.

**If we do not gain access to your home to carry out the gas service and safety check, we may have to resort to legal action.**

### **It is important that you:**

- Reply promptly when you receive your annual gas service and safety check appointment. If it is not a suitable time for you, we will be happy to rearrange your appointment.
- Allow us access to your home at the agreed appointment time to carry out repairs or the annual gas service and safety check.
- Tell us of any faults or damage to any gas appliance immediately.
- Make sure any air vents are not blocked up if you have a gas appliance.

### **Gas is dangerous!**

If an appliance is not working properly it can give out carbon monoxide fumes. You cannot smell, taste or see carbon monoxide. If you are exposed to carbon monoxide even for a short period of time, it can cause serious injury or even death.

### **Gas leaks**

#### **If you smell gas, you need to:**

- Turn off the gas supply at the meter
- Open windows to ventilate the area
- Call National Grid on **0800 111 999**

#### **Do not:**

- Smoke, use matches or other naked flames
- Use a mobile phone in the property
- Operate a light switch, intercom or any electrical appliance

## Carrying out your own improvements and alterations

Under the terms of your tenancy agreement, you have the right to make improvements to your home, subject to approval from the Council. Before making any alterations or modifications to your home, such as fitting a bathroom suite, laying a driveway or adding a porch, you must get permission from us in writing. In some circumstances you may also need planning or Building Regulation approval.

Please contact us on **0800 074 0263** giving details of the work you plan to do. We will discuss your plans with you to ensure the work you propose to do will not make your home unsafe. We may need to visit your home to consider what you are planning.

Sometimes we will not give permission to undertake improvements. This would include the following type of work:

- Structural alteration to the property
- Any improvements that will adversely affect the future maintenance of the property
- Work that may affect the letting of the property in the future

If we give permission in writing, we will include any conditions related to the permission. It's important that you read these in depth as they include important information regarding health and safety, responsibility for maintenance and the standards we expect.

After you have completed the work, we may visit to check everything has been carried out satisfactorily. You should also provide us with any electrical or gas certificates.

Your rent will not increase as a result of any improvements you made. However, it is important to note that you will become responsible for maintaining any improvement work that you carry out yourself and for reinstatement to the original condition of the property at the end of your tenancy, if required.

## Right to compensation for improvements

If you make any agreed alterations to your home, you may be entitled to compensation under a government initiative called the Right to Compensation, should you decide to move out. You can obtain further details by calling **0800 074 0263**.

## Mutual Exchange

Please remember, **when carrying out a mutual exchange you accept the responsibilities of the outgoing tenant. This includes any improvements and alterations made by the outgoing and former tenants.** You should make sure you know what you are taking on and if in doubt, please ask.



## Helpful information: Clearing a blocked waste

### General advice

Blockages in basins and sinks are usually caused by the build-up of waste in the trap, for example, fat, tea leaves, hair. We advise you to clear waste pipes and traps at least once a month, with hot water or a clearing product. DO NOT use caustic soda as it destroys the 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 maybe in the soil stack or main drain. If so, please contact us because we will need to clear the blockage.

### To unblock a bath, basin or sink

- Scoop out most of the water using a jug or other container
- Hold a rag tightly over the overflow opening and place a plunger over the plug hole
- Pump the plunger up and down rapidly to clear the blockage

After clearing the blockage, it is advisable to rinse out with a household blockage cleaner.

## **Preventing a blocked toilet**

To prevent a blocked toilet, do not flush away sanitary products or nappies. Put them in the bin instead.

Please be aware that blockages in toilets are also caused by unusual objects, such as toys or toilet fresheners.

If your toilet does get blocked, please report the repair to us immediately on **0800 074 0263**.



## Helpful information: Damp/Mould caused by condensation

Most homes get some condensation and areas that are likely to be affected are the bathroom and kitchen. However, it can lead to dampness and mould growth in your home, which looks unpleasant and can increase the risk of respiratory illness. It can also affect wall plaster and cause woodwork to rot

### How to reduce condensation in your home

- Close your kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into colder rooms.
- Cover pans when cooking and let the steam escape by opening a window or using an extractor fan if you have one fitted.
- Open some windows in other rooms for a while each day. This allows a change of air.
- Dry clothes outdoors whenever possible or use small ventilated rooms.
- Wipe down surfaces when moisture settles to prevent mould forming.
- Maintain a low background heat when the weather is cold or wet.
- Do not block air vents and allow air to circulate around furniture and cupboards.



## Helpful information: Resetting a trip switch

If you have an older 'fuse board' with rewirable fuses, you should not try to repair or replace fuses yourself. Contact us for help. Many homes now have modern fuse boxes called 'consumer units'. These have circuit breakers or 'trip switches'. If an electrical fault occurs, the circuit breakers switch everything off to prevent injury and damage. If your home has a consumer unit it will be near your electricity meter. It is important you make sure you know where your consumer unit is, and where the trip switches are.

### To reset a trip



- Unplug all appliances
- Open the cover on the consumer unit to show the trip switches

- Reset the trip by pushing up the trip switch
- Plug the appliances back in one at a time to check if any are faulty and tripping the switch again
- Replace the trip cover

## If the trip goes again

This may mean there is a fault in an appliance or light fitting. You will need to find out where the fault is by following these steps:

- First, unplug all appliances
- Then reset the 'tripped' switch to the ON position (if it is a button , press it in)
- Turn each light on, one at a time
- If the trip switch goes again after you turn a light on, then the bulb or light fitting may be faulty
- Plug each appliance in and turn them on, one at a time
- If the trip switch goes again after plugging an appliance back in, there is a fault with that appliance
- Turn the faulty light or appliance off and unplug it. You should then be able to reset the trip switch
- If the switch keeps moving back to the off position, call us on **0800 074 0263** – Option 2. We will arrange an inspection by an electrician.

## Helpful information: Fire safety

In addition to the following guidance, you can find useful information on [Home Fire Safety](#) on the website of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service at [www.bedsfire.com](http://www.bedsfire.com)

### Preventing fire

- Never leave cigarettes burning
- Never smoke in bed
- Keep matches and lighters away from children
- Never leave the room when the hob or grill is on
- Regularly check electrical appliances and their leads. Don't overload electrical sockets.
- Do not leave candles unattended
- Make sure your door and window keys are close by
- Close all inside doors at night when you go to bed
- Test your smoke alarm weekly. If you have a battery operated alarm, never remove the batteries unless you are replacing them.

## Escaping from fire

- Close the door of the room where the fire has started and close all other doors behind you, if it is safe for you to do so
- Never enter a room if you think there is a fire inside
- Alert everyone and get them out as quickly as possible
- Use the escape route that you have practised (it is a good idea to pre-plan an escape route rather than waiting until there is a fire).
- Phone 999 and ask for the fire brigade

## Escaping from fire in flats and maisonettes

- Communal blocks and sheltered housing schemes have their own fire safety arrangements. Please read the fire safety instructions posted in your block so that you are familiar with the procedure.
- Keep the escape routes clear of obstructions at all times. If the corridors, balconies or staircases outside your home are not kept clear, report it to the Council.

## If a pan of hot oil catches fire

- Do not take any risks. Leave it where it is, turn off the heat if it's safe to do so, then get out and ring 999.
- NEVER THROW WATER ON BURNING OIL

## Helpful information: Asbestos

### What is asbestos and why was it used in buildings?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral made up of many small fibres. It is mined from rock and milled into fibres from which a wide range of materials were produced.

Asbestos fibres are strong and resistant to heat and chemicals. This led to their widespread use in a wide range of building materials and other products, particularly between 1950 and 1980 but certain types were still used up to 1999.

### Why is asbestos potentially a problem?

- Asbestos containing materials in good condition do not pose a risk to your health
- They can, however, become a risk should asbestos fibres become airborne
- This may occur if the asbestos containing material is drilled, sanded, cut or broken up. It can also occur should the material be in a poor or damaged condition and liable to disturbance. If disturbed, the material may release fibres that can be inhaled deep into the lung, causing possible damage.
- People at most risk are those that work directly with asbestos. These include builders, carpenters, electricians, plumbers and decorators.

## What is the likelihood of exposure to asbestos in the home?

- Even if your home contains undisturbed asbestos products, you are highly unlikely to be affected by it
- We will include a risk assessment if we undertake any repairs or major works to your home. This will assess the potential location of asbestos and likelihood of disturbance during works
- We will take measures to manage the material safely either by avoiding disturbance, encapsulation or removal by specialist contractors working in a controlled manner

## Where is asbestos likely to be found?

The list below shows some common areas where asbestos containing material may be found. The list of products that may contain asbestos is a lengthy one – this list is not all-inclusive.

### Exterior

- Roof garage and shed sheets, tiles or roof felt
- Fascias, gutters and downpipes

### Interior

- Partition walls
- Panels beneath windows
- Cupboards around domestic boilers
- Panels behind electrical equipment
- Panels behind fires or heaters
- Panels on or inside fire doors

- Concealed in ducts or pipe casings
- Bath panels
- Floor tiles
- Textured coatings (Artex)
- Gaskets and rope seals inside gas appliances
- Cold water storage tanks

## Doing DIY and avoiding asbestos

High, short-term exposure to asbestos fibres can occur during 'Do it yourself' DIY work.

- Do not carry out any DIY works on asbestos containing materials
- Do not disturb it by banging nails or screwing into it
- Do not drill into it by hand or power tools
- Do not scrape it or use a steam stripper
- Do not attempt to remove asbestos containing materials

If you are unsure if there are any asbestos containing materials in your home, please call the Council on **0800 074 0263** to find out more before you do any DIY work. If you have damaged asbestos materials in your home, you should seek advice on appropriate action to take. Please telephone the Repairs Freephone (0800 074 0263) and we will arrange for someone to inspect the damage.

## Helpful information:

### Energy saving

#### What can you do to conserve energy?

- Turn your thermostat down. Reducing your room temperature by 1°C could cut your heating bills by up to 10%. If you have a programmer, set your heating and hot water to come on only when required rather than all the time.
- Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows and check for draughts around windows and doors.
- Always turn off the lights when you leave a room.
- Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave laptops and mobile phones on charge unnecessarily.
- If possible, fill up the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher: one full load uses less energy than two half loads
- Try not to wash clothes on a setting above 40°C. A wash at 60°C uses 30% more energy as most of the energy used by a washing machine is used in heating the water.
- Only boil as much water as you need (but remember to cover the element if you're using an electric kettle).



- Use energy saving light bulbs. They may cost more to buy but they last up to 10 times longer than ordinary bulbs.
- A dripping hot water tap wastes energy and in one week wastes enough hot water to fill half a bath.
- When washing food or vegetables, use a bowl rather than a running tap.
- The sun is the most readily available source of heat there is and the cheapest! So make the most of it by opening internal doors of any rooms which get more sun than others and let the warm air travel through your home.
- Setting your heating to turn off one hour before you leave the house and turn back on just half an hour before your return will mean that the heat is not wasted on an empty house.
- There are a few easy ways to save energy when cooking which can also speed up the amount of time you spend over a hot stove. Always use the correct size pan. If only using a small pan, then use a smaller burner.
- If you're buying new electrical appliances, look for their energy efficiency rating. Good rating = cheaper to run.



## Our standards

### Anyone working in your home must:

- Introduce themselves and show you identification before entering
- Be polite and patient with you and treat you and your home with respect
- Explain what they are going to do and discuss how this will affect you or your neighbours
- Protect your belongings from damage, dust and paint
- Make sure materials and tools do not cause danger to anyone
- Clear rubbish from your home at the end of each working day
- Ask your permission to use your facilities
- Tell you when they need to turn off electricity, water or gas and make sure they are reconnected at the end of the day (if it's safe to do so)

### Workers are not allowed to:

- Smoke, swear or play radios in or around your home
- Be in your home with children under 16 without a responsible adult being present
- Receive gifts from you

## Comments, compliments and complaints

Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to improving the quality of services provided to you. We welcome your feedback on our services.

### Comments and compliments

If you would like to comment on, or compliment us on how we deliver your services, or how we have dealt with your enquiry, please follow the guidelines below on how to give your feedback.

### Complaints

We welcome complaints because they help us to see where we can improve our services. If you are not satisfied with the service you receive, please contact us, we will do our best to put the matter right as quickly as possible.

### How to give your feedback

You can telephone or write to the manager of the service you are giving feedback about or you can contact Customer Relations by telephone or email:

- 0300 300 6077 or 0300 300 4995
- [customer.relations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customer.relations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

You can also contact us by post:-

Customer Relations  
Improvement and Corporate Services  
Central Bedfordshire Council  
Priory House  
Monks Walk  
Chicksands  
Shefford  
Beds SG17 5TQ

We want to give you the best service we can. To do this we need your help. Please cover all the relevant points, but be as brief as you can. Avoid writing long letters or emails – you may feel you need to write in great detail but in most cases this is not necessary.

Give your contact telephone and email details, as well as your address. Then, if the person dealing with the complaint needs more information, he or she can contact you and ask.

You can find further information on [customer feedback](#) on our website: [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk) or by phoning Customer Services on 0300 300 8302.











## A great place to live and work

[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

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