

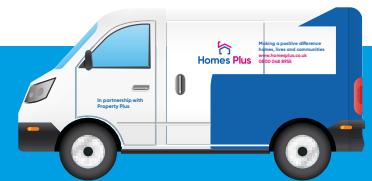
My

repairs, maintenance and safety guide

This handy, pull-out guide tells you all you need to know about our repairs and maintenance service, along with important advice about how you can help us keep you and your family safe.

Each year we spend around £30 million repairing, maintaining and improving our homes. This work is carried out by Property Plus, who were recently named Contractor of the Year in the UK Housing Awards.

These are the sector's most influential awards, which celebrate the UK's top housing services and are presented jointly by the Chartered Institute of Housing and Inside Housing.



Repairs and maintenance

Looking after your home

Looking after your home is a joint responsibility between you and Homes Plus. We are responsible for most, but not all, repairs.

It's your responsibility to take care of your home, report repairs as soon as possible and allow us access to your home to undertake the work. Our responsibilities are those repairs that are set out in your tenancy agreement.

Below is a quick reference guide outlining your responsibilities and the repairs we are responsible for, as your landlord.



Your responsibility

- ✓ **Condensation**
- ✓ **Blocked sink, bath, shower or toilet**
- ✓ **Replacement toilet seat**
- ✓ **Lost key**
- ✓ **New bulb for lighting inside your home or for your security lighting**
- ✓ **Cracked/smashed windows**
- ✓ **Fixtures and fittings (e.g. curtain rails)**
- ✓ **Minor cracks to plaster inside your home**
- ✓ **Replacing a blown fuse**
- ✓ **Decorating the inside of your home**

Our responsibility

- ✓ **Lighting in communal entrance or landing**
- ✓ **Blocked guttering***
- ✓ **Window won't close or open**
- ✓ **Broken shower (if we fitted it)**
- ✓ **Leaking roof**
- ✓ **Loss of power**
- ✓ **Problem with your hot water or heating**
- ✓ **External maintenance including soffits and fascias and uneven pathways***
- ✓ **Repairing tap or kitchen unit**
- ✓ **Misted glass in windows***
- ✓ **Damaged electrical socket**

**Undertaken as part of the 5 yearly MOT programme. Please contact us if blocked guttering is causing water to enter your home.*

Repairing your home

An **emergency repair** is a problem that represents an immediate risk to safety, security or health, such as:

- No heating or hot water
- Major damage to the structure of your home
- An uncontrollable water leak
- A gas leak or dangerous electrical fault
- An unsecure front door or window causing a security issue

All other types of repairs are classed as **non-emergency** repairs.

Repair timescales

We know that timely repairs are the most important part of our service. All repair requests are categorised to be completed quickly and efficiently within our general and heating repair timescales.

General repairs

Emergency repairs - within 4 hours
(Immediate risk to safety, security or health)

Non-emergency repairs

Less than one hour to complete
– within 24 hours (Monday – Friday)

All other routine repairs
– within 17 days

Major works - 60 days

Major works where the cost is more than £500 or will take longer than a day to complete e.g. rebuilding a brick wall

Heating repairs

All heating and hot water repairs are carried out by our contractor, Phoenix Gas, within the agreed timescales outlined below.

Emergency repairs - made safe within 6 hours

No heating or hot water, uncontrollable water leak, report of gas leak.

If you smell gas, you should immediately call the **National Gas Emergency Service on 0800 111 999** who will tell you what to do. Further details can be found on page seven.

An engineer will attend within six hours to make safe and fix the problem. If this is not possible, alternative heating will be provided until the issue can be resolved within the timescales listed below:

Repaired within 5 days

Gas combi boiler

Repaired within 10 days

Fire back boiler, solid or oil fuel appliances and solar thermal systems.

Non-urgent repairs - 15 days

E.g. room thermostat, radiator valve or dripping radiator repair.

Reporting a repair

Emergency repairs can be reported 24/7 to our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**.

Non-emergency routine repairs can be reported using our online website form – **www.homesplus.co.uk/request-a-repair** or by calling our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**.



Counting the cost of missed appointments

Each year thousands of pounds are lost due to customers missing pre-arranged repairs appointments. This money could have been spent on providing



18 new kitchens

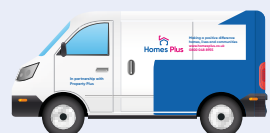
or



25 new bathrooms

You can help us cut this cost by always letting us know if you can no longer make an appointment.

Simply call us on **0800 048 8955** beforehand so we can change our visit to a time that suits you and offer your appointment to another customer who is waiting for a repair.



Improving your home

Each year we spend more than £16 million carrying out home improvements. This includes fitting new bathrooms, kitchens and doors, along with replacing old heating systems with new energy efficient boilers. Rewiring properties and carrying out home MOTs are also part of our planned improvement works.

Work to replace kitchens, bathrooms, boilers and external doors is based on the age of these components within your home, as shown below:



Kitchen - 20 years old



Bathroom - 30 years old



Boiler - 15 years old



External doors - 30 years old

If your fixtures do not fit the above age criteria, they will continue to be repaired until they are old enough for replacement and our team is next working in your area.

When your kitchen, bathroom, boiler or external doors are due for replacement there is no need to call us. We will contact you well before our teams are working in your area.

Home MOT programme

Our MOT programme makes sure that every home within a neighbourhood has an MOT every five years to tackle minor external repairs and decorative work.

An extensive schedule of work is undertaken during a home MOT, including:

- Gutter cleaning and repair
- Front and back door cleaning
- Soffit and fascia minor repairs and decorating
- Path and slab re-levelling to front and rear
- Fencing repairs
- External window and door paintwork
- Window handles, hinges and closure repairs
- Broken or misted window glass repair
- Damp proof course and bridging repairs, where needed

Access to your home

While we understand that having improvements carried out in your home may cause disruption, it's really important that you let us undertake this work as we cannot guarantee that we will be able to continue to source and repair old parts. This could lead to your home having mismatched replacement parts and it taking us much longer to complete repairs.

Aids and adaptations

We understand the importance of your independence and will do all that we can to help customers stay in their own homes for as long as possible.

If you have a disability or specific need that prevents you from living independently, you can apply for an adaptation to be made to your home.

To find out more visit www.homesplus.co.uk/aids-and-adaptations or call our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**.



Cutting condensation and giving mould the brush off



Condensation is a nuisance, but it can be avoided and the good news is that it is very rare for it to indicate any kind of building defect.

Condensation is particularly common in rooms like kitchens and bathrooms. It happens when warm, moist air reaches cold surfaces like windows or walls.

If severe condensation is ignored, it can become a major problem in your home.

In a property of two people, approximately **23 pints of moisture** can be added per day, through breathing, showers, baths, boiling kettles, cooking and washing dishes.

Fortunately there are some easy steps you can take to cut condensation:

- ▶ Keep your home warm to avoid cold surfaces. Condensation is worse in buildings which are constantly heating and cooling.
- ▶ Place lids on saucepans when cooking, to reduce steam in the kitchen.
- ▶ Try not to dry clothes on radiators or racks indoors. If you have to do this, use the bathroom. Open a window to allow air to circulate and close the door to that room.
- ▶ If you use a tumble dryer, make sure it is vented to an open window or through an outside wall to stop moisture spreading through your home. If your dryer has a built-in condenser, make sure that the filter is cleaned and cleared regularly.
- ▶ When you are cooking or bathing, use an extractor fan or open a window and keep the door closed. Keep the extractor fan on or the window open for about 20 minutes after you have finished (with the door closed).
- ▶ Leave trickle vents (the slotted vents in your window frames) open when rooms are occupied - even in the winter when your heating is on. These vents provide constant ventilation which removes water vapour.
- ▶ Don't use paraffin or Calor gas heaters.
- ▶ Leave a gap between your wall and the back of free-standing furniture like wardrobes or cupboards. Try not to overfill cupboards, wardrobes and drawers so that air can circulate around the contents.
- ▶ When condensation appears, wipe it away and ventilate the area.
- ▶ Use moisture traps, available from most DIY stores, in affected rooms for a big reduction in condensation.

Have I got damp or is it condensation?

Is the problem on north-facing walls, in the corner of a room, in cupboards, behind furniture or under work surfaces?

This is usually the result of condensation, where there is little air movement

Can you see water droplets on windows or water pooling on window sills?

This is condensation

Can you see mould looking like black spots along the edges of your skirting or ceilings?

This is condensation

Is there a clearly defined damp stain?

This might be penetrating damp or a water leak – you need to report this to us

Can you see a 'tidemark' on ground floor room walls, extending to around 900-1000mm above the floor surface?

This is uncommon. You need to report this to us

If you notice mould in your home, you should treat it straight away to stop it from spreading and causing damage. You can do this by sterilising the affected area with a suitable fungicidal wash (available from most DIY stores), following the manufacturer's instructions.



Positive ventilation units

To help you manage condensation we install positive input ventilation equipment to homes when we fit a new kitchen or bathroom. This equipment continually operates to force moist air out of the home before it has the opportunity to condense on surfaces.



Are you covered?

What would you do if you lost everything because of a fire or flood in your home?

As your landlord, it's our responsibility to insure the building in which you live. Buildings insurance covers the cost of repairing damage to a property's structure, as well as replacing things like pipes, cables and drains.

This insurance does not include your personal possessions.

It's your responsibility to arrange home contents insurance, which can cost just a few pounds a week, to cover the cost of replacing your belongings in the event of accidental damage, fire, flooding or theft.



Please visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk for further guidance.

Looking after communal grounds

The maintenance of communal grounds, such as the gardens around our retirement living schemes, is carried out by the Property Plus grounds maintenance team.

The team has a clear service standard for their work, so you know what to expect.

Grass will be cut every ten working days, working out at between 14 and 16 visits each year.



In a new, greener approach, the team is cutting and dropping – this is called ‘grasscycling.’ Box collections will take place twice a year.

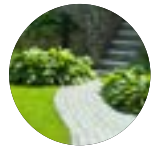
Grasscycling:

- Saves time and money by eliminating the collection and removal of grass cuttings for 90% of the cuts undertaken throughout the year.
- Encourages healthier grass and releases nutrients into the soil.
- Provides a natural source of fertiliser and helps the soil to retain water.
- Saves energy by conserving the fuel that is required to take cuttings to landfill/composting sites, helping us to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Saves valuable landfill/composting space. Research also shows that the decomposition of grass cuttings may substantially enhance soil microbial activity and that significant amounts of nutrients, mainly nitrogen, can be returned to the soil by grasscycling, reducing fertilizer use.

Hedges in communal areas will be trimmed twice a year. The first cut will take place during August and the second during the winter. Due to the Wildlife & Country Act 1981, we are unable to cut hedges until August, due to the nesting season. If a road junction is being obstructed or a pathway is impassable because of an overgrown hedge, we can do a sight line cut - the height will not be reduced until August.



Paths and hardstanding will be swept clear of grass, leaves and litter after every cut. Hardstanding spaces like washing drying areas will be kept clear of moss, sprayed annually and litter-picked each month.



Spraying of weeds is carried out during dry weather in as many areas as possible. We cannot undertake this work when it's raining as it will not be successful.



Strimming and weed spraying cannot be carried out at the same time as it will be ineffective. Weeds should start to die off 7-10 working days after being treated so should not need strimming.

Reporting issues

You can let us know if you have any concerns about our grounds maintenance service by completing our online form – www.homesplus.co.uk/gardening-services or by calling our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**.

Timescales

The schedule below highlights when the work is planned to be completed throughout the year.

	Mar - May	June - Sept	Oct - Nov	Dec - Feb
Grass				
Hedges				
Shrubs				
Hardstanding				

Safety checks

As your landlord we have important legal duties and obligations. Most of these responsibilities involve safeguarding you, your home and family.

By law, we must carry out a range of safety inspections and it's an important condition of your tenancy that you give us access to your home to carry out this vital work.

Our essential safety checks include:

- Gas servicing and repairs
- Electrical installation checks and associated repairs
- Solid fuel and oil central heating servicing and repairs
- Managing asbestos
- Solar PV roof panel inspections
- Un-vented cylinders checks
- Fire door safety checks
- Stairlifts and hoists
- Water hygiene
- Fire risk assessments – communal areas and retirement living schemes only

Gas servicing and repairs

Every year more than 30 people in the UK are killed because of faulty gas fires or appliances in the home. You can't see, smell or taste carbon monoxide but it can kill within minutes.

To keep you safe, every 12 months we undertake a safety check and service any gas appliances in your home to make sure that they are safe.

We also check that appliances are working efficiently, which can help to reduce your energy bills.

This work is carried out by Phoenix Gas Services, our Gas Safe Registered contractor.

Report it!

If you think you need a gas safety check and service and have not received an appointment from Phoenix, please call our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**.

Gas safety tips

- 🔥 Never attempt any DIY with gas
- 🔥 Make sure you know where to find your gas meter and how to turn off the gas in an emergency
- 🔥 Never block-up air ventilation points and ensure that the gas flue is always kept clear
- 🔥 Never cover gas appliances
- 🔥 Don't use a gas appliance if you have any doubt that it is not working properly
- 🔥 Report any problems or repairs to our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**

What should I do if I smell gas?



DO:

- Call the National Gas Emergency Service immediately on **0800 111 999** who will tell you what to do
- Turn off your gas supply at the meter
- Open your doors and windows
- Keep people away from the area

DO NOT:

- Turn electrical switches on or off or do anything else that could create an electrical spark
- Smoke
- Use naked flames and put out any that are present

You can find out more on the Cadent website – www.cadentgas.com



Electrical testing

An electrical inspection is carried out every five years, to make sure that any electrical installations in your home are safe for you and your family.

Our contractors will need clear access to your fuse board and most of your electrical sockets/outlets during the inspection, which takes around two hours to complete.

Report it!

If you think your home needs an electrical inspection, please call our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**.

Electrical safety tips

- ⚡ Never attempt any DIY with electricity
- ⚡ Only approved permission requests for electrical alterations can be undertaken by registered and insured electricians
- ⚡ Report any electrical fault or defect to our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**
- ⚡ Only buy reputable goods that meet safety standards, such as CE marked goods



DIY and home improvements

Before making any improvements or alterations to your home it is essential that you obtain written permission from Homes Plus, and any other approvals required, before any work is started.

It's vital to ensure that the work you want to complete is safe to undertake and will not lead to faulty or sub-standard work, which could put your safety at risk.

Requests for permission need to be made using our online form, which can be found on our website – www.homesplus.co.uk/diy-and-home-improvements



Meter tampering - report it!

Every year around 280 people die as a result of meter tampering.

If you are concerned that an electric or gas meter may have been tampered with to bypass the payment meter in one of our homes or buildings, please urgently report it to our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**. This type of tampering is extremely dangerous and can have disastrous consequences.

You can also report it anonymously to Stay Energy Safe by completing a form on their website – www.stayenergysafe.co.uk or by calling them on **0800 023 2777**.

Fire safety in your home

Did you know that you can contact your local fire and rescue service to get advice on:

- Fire safety in your home
- Preventing common fires
- Making a fire escape plan
- Electrical safety

You can also book a home visit so that they can make you aware of any potential hazards within your home and offer general fire safety advice.

Below we have also shared some fire safety tips.



Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Visit: www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Call: 0800 0241 999

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service

Visit: www.shropshirefire.gov.uk

Call: 01743 260200

Cut the risk of fire in your home



Stay in the kitchen when cooking, especially if you're cooking with fat.



Never leave children unattended, while they are preparing meals.



Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order to prevent them triggering a fire.



Use plugs safely – too many in one socket can start a fire.



Always use the charger that came with your phone or tablet. If you need to buy a replacement, choose a branded, genuine product.



Don't leave items continuously on charge, particularly overnight.



When you finish a cigarette, make sure you put it right out – take special care when putting out cigarettes on balconies – just because you are outside, it doesn't mean a fire can't start.



Put candles in a holder and keep them away from things that may burn – never leave them burning when you're not in the room.



A lot of fires start at night – do some checks before you go to bed.



Data source – www.gov.uk

Fire safety in apartment buildings

Nothing is more important to us than the safety of our customers. As a responsible landlord we have an extensive ongoing programme in place to check our buildings and carry out any work required, to ensure that we comply with government regulations and guidance.

Following the Grenfell tragedy, the government commissioned an Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety. This led to the introduction of a new Building Safety Bill, which received Royal Assent to become an Act of Parliament in May 2022.

What is covered in this new Building Safety Act?

- The Act particularly focuses on high-risk buildings where the spread of fire or structural defects could lead to the loss of life.
- High-risk buildings are defined by their height and use. This means that all buildings that are at least 18 metres in height or have at least seven storeys, with a minimum of two residential homes, are specifically covered under the new regulations. Care homes are also included.
- A key aspect of this new legislation is resident engagement which will be overseen by a new Building Safety Regulator within the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

What will it mean for me?

In practical terms, these new government regulations and guidelines have been developed to ensure your safety in the event of a fire in your building.

The new Building Safety Regulator will oversee the safe design, construction and occupation of high-risk buildings so that residents are safe and feel safe. It will be independent and give expert

advice to residents and local regulators, landlords, building owners and the construction industry.

Setting out a stronger role for residents, the Regulator aims to ensure that residents' voices are properly heard and listened to. Residents will also be entitled to receive core information about their building's safety, with the right to request more details.

What are you doing to ensure the safety of customers living in high-rise buildings?

In line with our safety-first approach, we are appointing Building safety managers for each of our 500+ complex buildings. These managers will be responsible for ensuring the safety of the buildings they manage and its residents.

They will actively engage with residents, encouraging them to get involved and raise any safety concerns they may have, and keep them informed about building safety in an open and transparent way. This information will be available online soon – www.homesplus.co.uk/HUKYS

By working together you can help us to keep you safe.

Further details

Although the Building Safety Bill is now an Act of Parliament, the final phase of the regime is expected to come into force within the next twelve to eighteen months, so please look out for further updates on our website –

www.homesplus.co.uk/HUKYS, in our customer e-bulletins and in the next edition of this newsletter.



Fire compartmentation

Fire compartmentation is the division of a building into smaller subsections using fire-resistant construction materials. Its purpose is to slow down and contain the spread of fire and smoke.

Why is it important?

- It saves lives!
- It creates more time for people to evacuate a building by slowing the spread of fire and smoke.
- It provides customers with a safer way to leave a building by preventing exits being blocked.
- It protects firefighters as it makes containing and stopping a fire much easier for them.
- It reduces the risk of fire damage to your property. For example, instead of a fire spreading to the entire building, this fire safety method can limit the damage to small subsections of a building.
- It protects specific rooms or areas in a building. For instance, a laundry room, where there is higher risk of a fire starting, would be made into a separate building compartment.

How do you maintain the compartmentation of buildings?

- We check the adequacy of fire compartmentation during **fire risk assessments**. If further work is required, this is carried out.
- We ask any contractors working on our behalf to complete a Permit to Work, which ensures their work will not compromise the compartmentation of the building.

What can I do to help?

- **Do not wedge open your fire doors** as they play a key role in fire compartmentation. If a fire door is wedged open, the whole building will be exposed to the risk of a fire spreading. Even if the rest of the building has measures in place, when fire doors are open the fire will be able to spread.

- **Drilling holes** - it takes seconds for a fire to spread through a hole just the size of a pen nib, so it's vitally important that you do not drill through a compartmentation wall or ceiling. You should also not allow a third-party contractor to do this, without our prior written permission, as any damage caused by drilling must be repaired, and any gaps or holes filled.

Seeking our permission

If you or your appointed contractor are planning to undertake work that requires any of your ceilings or walls to be drilled, you must seek our prior permission.

Requests for permission need to be made using our online form, which can be found on our website – www.homesplus.co.uk/diy-and-home-improvements

Report it!

If you have any concerns that the compartmentation of your home or building may have been damaged, please report this to our customer services team on **0800 048 8955**.

Fire door checks

We check all fire doors in apartment blocks every six months.

If your home is in one of these buildings, then please be aware that your doors – including the entrance to your apartment and any store – will be included in this inspection programme.



Fire safety in communal areas

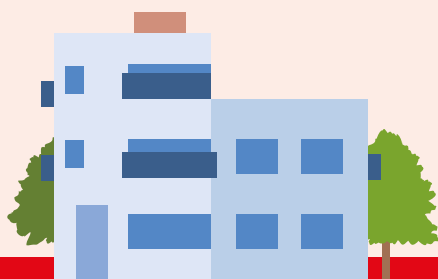
Keeping our communal areas safe is a priority for us and for our customers. A fire in a communal area could spread between homes. It could make it more difficult for the emergency services to reach you and might prevent you from leaving the building in an emergency.

Communal areas are places in your building that other people share, like landings, entrance lobbies, corridors, meter cupboards, lifts and open walkways.

If you live in a building that includes communal areas or your home has a balcony, you must ensure that you don't keep or store anything in these spaces that could, in the event of a fire:

- Stop you escaping quickly
- Prevent emergency services reaching you or your neighbours
- Give off toxic smoke or gas when burning
- Explode in high temperatures – such as non-safety glass in picture frames or ornaments
- Cause fire to spread more quickly

We carry out regular safety inspections in apartment blocks. All objects found in communal areas, which may present a fire hazard, will be removed. To find out more please visit our website – www.homesplus.co.uk/communal-areas



Top fire safety tips to keep you, your family and neighbours safe

Fire doors

Fire doors form part of the fire protection of your building. No alteration or replacement of doors should be made without our written consent. Please do not interfere with or remove any door closing mechanism and never prop open a fire door.



Communal cupboards

Cupboards in communal areas must not be used to store any combustible items such as tumble dryers and electrical appliances or other flammable materials, for example, large amounts of cardboard.



Barbecues, fuel containers, gas bottles and motorcycles

These pose a significant fire risk and their storage or use are prohibited in apartment blocks or communal areas.



Rubbish

Discarded rubbish can be highly flammable. It is a breach of your tenancy to dump rubbish. If rubbish is discarded by you or your visitors, you will be charged for its removal.



Mobility scooters

These must be stored and charged in your own apartment, not in communal areas.



Smoking

Do not smoke in communal areas. This includes the use of e-cigarettes.



Contacting Homes Plus



Call **0800 048 8955**



Follow www.facebook.com/MyHomesPlus



Visit www.homesplus.co.uk



Book an appointment to visit one of our offices by calling **0800 048 8955**

We are continuing to keep COVID-secure working practices in place. We believe that this is the safest decision for our customers, staff, and communities. Please visit www.homesplus.co.uk to find out more.