

Looking After Your Home

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We hope that you will enjoy living in your new home and becoming part of your new community. There are a few things to bear in mind which will help you to keep safe, manage your tenancy properly and be kind to the environment too.

FIRE SAFETY ADVICE

- ★ Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows how to escape;
- ★ Always allow access for us to service your fitted smoke alarm;
- ★ Keep matches away from children. If you do keep matches in your house, make sure they are in a place where children cannot reach them;
- ★ If you smoke, make sure all cigarettes and matches are put out properly and ensure you check ashtrays before retiring to bed;
- ★ Do not leave pans on the cooker unattended, especially pans of oil;
- ★ Avoid using bottled gas heaters and paraffin heaters; they are not allowed at all in buildings which are more than three stories tall. If you do have to use these types of heater, follow the manufacturer's instructions. Store and dispose of gas bottles properly. Do not store flammable liquids in your property;
- ★ Do not dry or air clothes near heaters, cookers or open fires. Make sure that open fires have fireguards;
- ★ Switch off and pull the plug out of the socket of any electrical appliances that are not in use. Some appliances, such as freezers, are meant to be left on. Please refer to manufacturer's instructions;
- ★ Close doors especially at bedtime to prevent fire spreading;
- ★ Keep passages and hallways clear of obstructions, flammable material or naked flame heating, e.g. gas or paraffin heaters;
- ★ Do not store rubbish or belongings below the stairs;
- ★ Do not remove any internal doors as they are there to reduce the risk of fire spreading.

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WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS A FIRE:

- ★ Try to be calm and don't panic.
- ★ Get everyone out as quickly as possible, closing doors as you leave to prevent the spread of fire.
- ★ Do not use the lift under any circumstances.
- ★ Call the fire brigade (**999**) from somewhere safe to do so, e.g. a neighbour's house, public phone or shop.
- ★ Do not re-enter the house for any reason until you are told it is safe to do so by the fire brigade.
- ★ Remember even if your 'pay as you go' mobile phone has run out of credit it will still allow you to call **999**.

IF YOU BECOME TRAPPED IN YOUR HOME BY A FIRE YOU SHOULD:

- ★ Close the door to the room you are in.
- ★ Try to seal any gaps under the door with clothes or a towel, to stop smoke entering.
- ★ Where possible, cover your face to prevent inhaling the smoke.
- ★ Shout for help from the window asking passers-by to call the fire brigade.
- ★ **You should test your smoke alarm regularly.**



ELECTRICAL SAFETY

- ★ Know where your meter is located and ensure you have an access key;
- ★ Switch off any appliances when not in use and pull out any plugs;
- ★ Never take electrical appliances into the bathroom;
- ★ Do not overload sockets;
- ★ Do not touch electrical appliances with wet hands;
- ★ Get to know your fuse board and how it works;
- ★ Do not store any combustible material near electrical meter;
- ★ Avoid using extension leads, where possible;
- ★ Keep sockets safe from children by fitting socket covers;
- ★ Report all broken switches, plugs and light fittings or any exposed wiring to our Housing & Customer Services team.

WATER SUPPLIES AND PLUMBING

Stopcocks

- ★ All tenants should know where their mains stopcock is located in case of a major leak. It is usually located under the kitchen sink or near the front door. If you cannot find it or are unsure, please contact us;
- ★ When your water supply has been turned off you will not be able to draw off any hot water once your tank is empty. You should, therefore, damp down or turn off the boiler straightaway to prevent damage to the cylinder and boiler;
- ★ There are also other stopcocks/ servicing valves in your house and you should be familiar with what they do in case of emergencies;
- ★ Once a year, stopcocks and servicing valves should be turned once and then back again to stop them seizing up.

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Taps

Over-tightening of taps causes the washer to wear out more quickly than necessary. Remember to turn the water supply off at the appropriate stopcock before replacing the washer.

Frozen Pipes

Winter weather can bring problems for all householders. Here are some simple steps you can take to protect your property from frozen or burst pipes.

Before winter sets in:

- ★ test your mains stopcock;
- ★ check you do not have any dripping taps and replace the tap washers when necessary;
- ★ check that any pipes near outside walls and external taps are lagged.

If you are away from home during the winter period:

- ★ turn off the stopcock;
- ★ turn on the bath/sink cold-water taps empty the toilet cistern by flushing it;

- ★ if you have central heating, leave it on a low or frost setting;
- ★ On returning home, make sure you turn off your bath and sink cold-water taps, before turning the stopcock back on. If you suspect a pipe has frozen, please contact our Housing & Customer Services team.

Burst Pipes

To stop water flowing from a burst pipe, shut the main stopcock and open all taps to run off water from the pipes and tank. If you have a burst pipe you should:

- ★ turn off the electricity at the mains switch on the fuse board as long as there is no water near your mains switch; the fuse board or box will usually be located near the front door or under the stairs;
- ★ turn off the stopcock;
- ★ turn off the central heating/hot water boiler;
- ★ put a container under any leak to try to catch the water, if you can;
- ★ contact the Housing & Customer Services Team.



Overflow Pipes

Overflow pipes remove excess water from your toilet cistern or heating/hot water system. These do not normally drip unless there is something not working properly. Therefore, please report any dripping overflow pipe.

If you have a loss of water supply

If you discover that your water supply has stopped for any reason, make sure all your taps are turned off (clockwise) and inform our repairs service.

KEEPING YOUR HOME FREE FROM DAMP AND MOULD

Damp conditions can cause mould to grow on walls and furniture. Damp cold housing encourages the growth of mould and mites, which can increase the risk of respiratory illnesses in some people. Some damp is caused by condensation and here are some tips on how you can keep it to a minimum, so reducing the risk of dampness and mould growth.

What is Condensation?

It starts as moisture or steam that is produced by cooking, washing or drying clothes indoors. Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather as the moisture turns to water (condenses) on cool surfaces such as mirrors, wall tiles, windows and even some clothes. It appears in places where there is little movement of air such as corners as well as in or behind wardrobes and cupboards.

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How to avoid condensation

These steps will help you reduce the condensation in your home.

Produce less moisture:

- ★ Cover pans when cooking;
- ★ Dry clothes outdoors whenever possible, otherwise use well ventilated rooms;
- ★ Vent your tumble dryer to the outside;
- ★ Avoid using paraffin or flueless bottled gas heaters – the gas produces a lot of moisture.

Control excess moisture:

- ★ Close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into other rooms;
- ★ Open kitchen and bathroom windows when cooking or washing (and for a while after) so that steam can escape; use an extractor fan if you have one;
- ★ Open some windows in other rooms for a while each day to allow a change of air;
- ★ Prevent mould forming by wiping down surfaces where moisture settles;

- ★ Do not block air vents.

Keep your house warm:

- ★ If possible, keep low background heat on all day, with background ventilation;
- ★ Take steps to prevent heat escaping, taking care not to block air vents.

Is it condensation?

Condensation is not the only cause of damp. It can also come from:

- ★ Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows;
- ★ Rain seeping through the roof where a tile or slate is missing, spilling from a blocked gutter, penetrating around window frames, or leaking through a cracked pipe;
- ★ Rising damp due to a defective damp-course or because there is no damp-course.

These causes of damp often leave a 'tidemark' and if your home is affected, please contact our Housing & Customer Services Team.



CRIME REDUCTION

If you would like advice concerning the security of your home, there are crime reduction officers at your local police station. Telephone 101 for your local crime reduction officer. They will be able to give advice over the telephone and can visit you in your own home.

Most burglaries are committed by opportunist thieves. Remember one quarter of all burglaries committed don't use force to enter a property. Think like a burglar - would there be an easy way to break into your home?

ENERGY ADVICE

We aim to make sure that our housing stock is energy efficient. Our top tips are:

- ★ Make sure you are using energy saving light bulbs;
- ★ Turning down your thermostat by one degree can cut your fuel costs by 10%;
- ★ Close your curtains at dusk to keep heat in;
- ★ Wait until you have a full load before using the washing machine;
- ★ Turn lights and other electrical items off when leaving a room;
- ★ Don't leave the fridge door open for longer than necessary;
- ★ Don't leave your TV and other appliances on 'standby';
- ★ Only boil the water you need in the kettle - don't fill it up if you are only making one hot drink;
- ★ Another way to cut down your fuel bill is to check with other energy suppliers whether you can get a better deal. You can also look for suppliers who provide energy from more sustainable sources ('green' energy).

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WASTE AND RECYCLING

The average household produces over one tonne of waste a year, but most people should be able to recycle over half the contents of their bin. You can recycle a wide range of materials from the kerbside and at household recycling centres. This helps us to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.

VERMIN/PEST CONTROL

Ark Housing does not take responsibility for eradicating vermin/pests from around or within our General Needs properties. The local council Pest Control Department should be contacted to deal with any instances of infestation. If any building defects are noted during the eradication, then the Association shall make good these faults to stop any potential future issues. We take full responsibility for vermin/pest control within our sheltered housing accommodation.