

# Tenants Guide to Repairs



For more information about emergency repairs, visit page 35

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## About this handbook

This handbook provides you with information about the repairs service to tenants. It also tells you what we need to know in order to arrange a repair to your home, what repairs you are expected to do, and how to do some of these yourself.

### Before you contact us about a repair

- We need you to check the details of your repair. Please look at the list at the side of this page to find your type of repair. You can then look at the pictures and guidance to help you describe the repair. By giving us as much information as possible, you can help us get your repair done right first time.
- Think about when someone can be at home to allow the repair operative in to do the work. The tenant or a person aged 18 or over must be present when our repairs operatives visit.

### When you are ready please contact us

Let us know any circumstances we need to take into account when someone comes to your home, for example you may be hard of hearing or have difficulties getting to the door.

## Contacting us

### How to report a repair

- For gas heating problems or gas servicing contact our gas contractor PH Jones on 01928 249496
- For routine repairs only, please complete an online request at [www.charnwood.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/repairs)
- For all other repairs, contact our call centre 01509 634666 (outside normal working hours we will only send out a repair operative if it is an emergency)
- If you are unable to report your repair online or by phone, you can write to us at: Repairs Service, Charnwood Borough Council, Southfield Road, Loughborough LE11 2TR. When you write to us or report online please give us your name, address and daytime telephone number with full details of your repair problem and what times of day you can be at home for us to come and do the work.
- Please do not report emergency or urgent repairs online or by post.

Report a repair online by using the QR code below:



# Reporting a repair

## When you call, let us know:

- Details of what needs repairing
- When you will be at home
- Anything we need to know about, such as if you have difficulties hearing

## We will assess the repair

- We will check whether the repair is our responsibility
- We will tell you how quickly we can deal with the repair
- If necessary, we will arrange for a member of staff to visit your home to look at what needs to be done
- We will give you an order number by text

## We will arrange the repair

- For most repairs, except emergencies we will agree which day we will come to do the repair. We also offer morning (8am – 1pm) or afternoon (12pm – 4pm) appointments, or we will fit in with school times (10am – 2pm)
- We will offer all-day appointments in appropriate circumstances.

## We will confirm the appointment

- For all repairs except emergencies we will confirm your appointment by your preferred method of contact.

## When you report a repair

- We may need to visit your home before ordering any repairs so we can assess exactly what work is needed
- Our repairs operatives normally work from 8am – 4pm on weekdays. At all other times and on bank holidays we will respond to emergencies only
- Please do not exaggerate your repair problem in order to get a quicker (emergency) response. If you do, we may charge you for the emergency call-out in line with our recharge policy.



**Report a repair online by using the QR code below:**





# Our service

## Safety – joint responsibilities

- We are responsible, by law, to carrying out a gas safety check once a year in all of our homes that have a gas supply.
- We are responsible for carrying out an electrical safety check once every five years, or sooner if we deem it necessary.
- You must allow us into your home to carry out the gas and electrical safety checks. It is for your safety. If you do not allow us in we will take legal action and charge for our costs.
- You must make sure that our air vents do not become blocked.
- You are responsible for checking any smoke and carbon monoxide detector we have provided. For the safety of your family, you should test it once a week and contact us if it is not working.



See ‘handy hints’ later in this guide.

## Warning - check identity cards

- Before you let anyone into your home to carry out a repair, inspection or gas service, you should check they are who they say they are. All of our staff, and any contractors doing work for us, must show you their identity card.
- Remember – when in doubt , keep them out!

## Insurance

We advise you to take out home contents insurance. This will cover you against damage to your personal items, carpets, furniture and other contents and decorations, including flood and fire damage.

It also covers certain items stolen in a break-in and any accidental damage to your home which may need repairing, for example, if a pipe bursts we will carry out the repairs but not redecorate.

You are free to find your own insurance but we can give you a leaflet and application form for an insurance scheme which we recommend. You can pay for this every week at the same time as your rent.

## When work is going to be done in your home

- We will tell you if you need to move or protect any furniture, or if you need to lift any floor covering (carpets, laminate). You should do this before the repair operative arrives but let us know if you are having any difficulties with this
- Repair operatives need a responsible adult (over 18 years old) to be in the home while they work. If you have to leave for any reason, the repair operative will also leave and you will need to make a new appointment
- Please make sure that repair operatives can get on with their work safely. Keep an eye on your children and pets. Repair operatives can leave if they feel that their health an safety, or yours, is at risk
- Our staff and contractors will treat you with respect. We expect you, members of your household and visitors to behave in a similar way towards them
- Please provide a smoke-free environment for our staff and contractors.

## How long it takes

When you report a repair to us we will discuss the nature of the problem. We will then tell you what response time category we have placed it in. The response times are measured from the date you report the problem to us.

**Emergency:** We will get someone to your home within 24 hours – This is for repairs that remove immediate danger to people, or stop serious damage to your home, for example complete loss of electrical power, a burst water pipe, or making your home secure. If we can't complete the repair in one visit, we will make the situation safe and come back to do follow-up work as soon as possible. You can call us about emergencies at any time day or night.

**Urgent:** We will complete the work within five calendar days, though some urgent repairs will be completed within three calendar days. 'Urgent repairs' are repairs where there is no risk to you or your family but which are causing you inconvenience.

**Routine:** We will complete the repair within 28 calendar days. 'Routine repairs' are repairs where the fault does not cause problems straight away or make it dangerous for people in the property or outside but still needs to be done quite soon.

**Planned work:** Planned repairs include plastering, repointing of brickwork and the replacement of a shed door. These repairs may take up to 90 days.

**Major works:** Major works are repairs and improvements that, because of their nature, form part of a programme of works. Planned works include the replacement of kitchens and bathrooms. These works may take up to six months.

## What if the work is not completed in time?

If a repair operative does not come within the response time or keep to a morning or afternoon appointment agreed with you, please contact us.

## Can I change or cancel an appointment?

Yes. If you cannot keep to an agreed appointment or if a repair is no longer needed, please contact us as soon as possible.

## Missed appointments

If you do not contact us and our repairs operative finds that no one is at home the repair will be cancelled. We may charge you for wasting the repairs operative's time in line with our recharge policy. If you still need us to do the repair, you will need to report the problem to us again.

## What standard of service can I expect?

We will respond to repairs problems in an efficient and helpful way. Most repairs are carried out by our own repair operatives. We sometimes use contractors for specialist work, for example gas heating breakdown, repairs and servicing. When this happens, we will tell you the name of the contractor.

## Do you check up on the quality of workmanship?

We carry out a customer satisfaction survey to a selection of tenants who have had repairs carried out recently to ask them what they thought of our service. We also carry out regular checks to make sure that the repair operatives work to a high standard. This is done by choosing some completed repairs and visiting the property to look at the work.



## What if I am not happy with the repair?

First, please give us the chance to put things right: we will try to sort it out as soon as possible.

If you are still not happy and want to complain, please contact us at [www.charnwood.gov.uk/your\\_say](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/your_say).

## Safety in your home

Safety in your home is one of our highest priorities as your landlord and, in order to protect you we provide hard-wired smoke detectors on each floor of your home and a carbon monoxide detector wherever there is a fixed combustion appliance, i.e. a gas fire or a gas-fired central heating boiler.

## Our responsibilities

### Your home

We are responsible for repairs to the structure and exterior of your home including drains, guttering and outside pipes, excluding glazing if caused by accidental damage or without a police crime number. Inside your home we are responsible for water and gas pipes, wiring, heating systems, drainage, power and light fittings, and any items originally provided by us, not items that are your responsibility.

### Your garden

We are responsible for any outbuilding or sheds originally provided by us, and the main paths that lead to your front and back doors and clothes-line posts. We will mark out boundaries and maintain fences, hedges and walls in line with our fencing and boundary policy.

### Communal areas

We look after any communal areas and facilities in our blocks of flats and schemes.

## What you must do

### Your general responsibilities are

- to keep your home in good condition, including the fixtures, fittings and decoration inside
- to allow repair operatives into your home to carry out repairs, safety checks and inspections
- to let us know as soon as you notice a repair is needed and to take action to prevent it getting worse or causing injury
- to repair any fixture or appliance you own or took responsibility for when you began the tenancy
- to fit wastes, pipework and vents for washing machines, dishwashers and tumble driers, if not already fitted
- to take steps to prevent blockages in waste pipes or drains
- to arrange for the repair of any damage caused by you, a member of your household, a visitor or a pet.

# What if I can't carry out my responsibilities?

You are responsible for taking care of the inside of your home and certain repairs. If, however, you are vulnerable we may be able to put you in touch with other organisations that can help. Please remember to always use a reputable business if you search yourself. Check online reviews and ratings.

## Repairs you are responsible for

The following are repairs that you must do yourself or arrange and pay to get them done:

- Replacing door locks or keys when keys are lost or broken, or you get locked out
- Getting extra keys cut and gaining entry if you get locked out
- Replacing broken or cracked glass in your windows or doors unless you have reported it to the police and been given a specific crime reference number.
- Repairing or replacing handles, catches or knobs on cupboards
- Fitting extra window locks
- Adjusting doors, particularly when you have new floor coverings fitted
- Fitting curtain rails, pelmets, picture rails and coat hooks. Please do not attach curtain battens or blinds to the window frames
- Filling in minor cracks or holes in walls and ceilings
- Replacing light bulbs, fluorescent tubes and starters (unless in communal areas)
- Testing any smoke and carbon monoxide detectors we provide. Tenants living in sheltered accommodation are not required to do this as it is wired to a system for which we are responsible. Please ask your warden for information and/or advice.





Arrange and pay to get them done:

- Resetting trip switches
- Trying to clear blocked basins, sinks, baths, showers and toilets
- Replacing toilet seats and flush chains
- Replacing plug and chains on baths, basins and sinks
- Cleaning and removing scale on shower heads
- Replacing clothes lines and restringing rotary driers (unless in a communal area)
- Repairing or replacing gate latches (unless in a communal area)
- Looking after garden paths except the main ones leading to your front or back doors and to the clothes-line
- Looking after garden features, such as patios, trellises, decking or ponds (unless in a communal area)
- Keeping gully grids clear of leaves and rubbish
- Replacing TV aerials and sockets (unless there is a communal aerial)

## **Damage and charging**

If you, or anyone in your home, cause damage to your home, we expect you to arrange to get it repaired. If we have to do the repair to make sure you and your family are safe you will have to pay for the cost of the repair. If damage is caused by criminal behaviour, we will carry out work to make your home safe. We will only do further work if you can give us a police crime number (not an incident number).

You can find more information on our approach to recharge on our website at [www.charnwood.gov.uk/recharges](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/recharges).

## **Changes you make to your home**

You can carry out changes to your home as long as you get our permission in writing before you start.

Most improvements, such as decorating and providing fitted units or shelves can be done without permission but more drastic alterations such as structural changes, loft conversions or garages do need our permission.

Please let us know if you wish to:

- Make any structural alterations or additions to the property
- Remove or alter the landlord's fixed units, doors, fixtures or fittings
- Change or decorate the exterior of the property
- Erect a garden shed, greenhouse, conservatory or lean to or other buildings
- Affix or hang any TV aerial, satellite dish or advertisement, or anything to the exterior of the building.

## Property alteration by a tenant

You may be required to get planning permission or building regulation approval if you wish to carry out major alterations to your home. Examples of such alterations could include building an extension, portioning of rooms, removing walls or chimney breasts and adding a garage or car parking space.

If you wish to make a major alteration to your property we will usually ask you for a full specification, drawings and health and safety documentation before we make a decision.

If you are unsure if you need permission, please speak to your tenancy and estate management officer. If you need permission, he or she will visit your home and advise you of the next steps.

We will write to you within 28 days to tell you if you have permission to start the work.

Permission to undertake the works will only be given in writing. The written permission may also include conditions regarding the works that must be adhered to.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Asbestos may be present in your home. Asbestos is a hazard if it is disturbed or is in poor condition. You must not undertake intrusive works without obtaining our permission in writing first and you must check with us that there is no asbestos present before starting work.**

If we do not give permission, we will tell you in writing why not. We will not refuse permission without good reason.

If we grant permission, it will be subject to the following conditions:

- You are responsible for the cost and quality of the work
- You will be responsible for the future maintenance and repair of any alteration made
- All gas work alterations must be carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer and a Gas Safety Certificate must be completed following such work by the engineer and forwarded to the council's compliance manager
- You must ensure that all works fully comply with building control regulations, planning restrictions, current gas and electrical regulations.

You must tell us as soon as the work is complete. An officer will then visit your home to inspect the work. If it fails to meet the required standard, we will either ask you to put the work right or restore the property to how it was before.

If you carry out improvement work without first seeking our permission or after we have refused permission, you may have to pay to put it back to its original state. We may also take legal action against you for breaking the tenancy agreement.





# Baths and basins

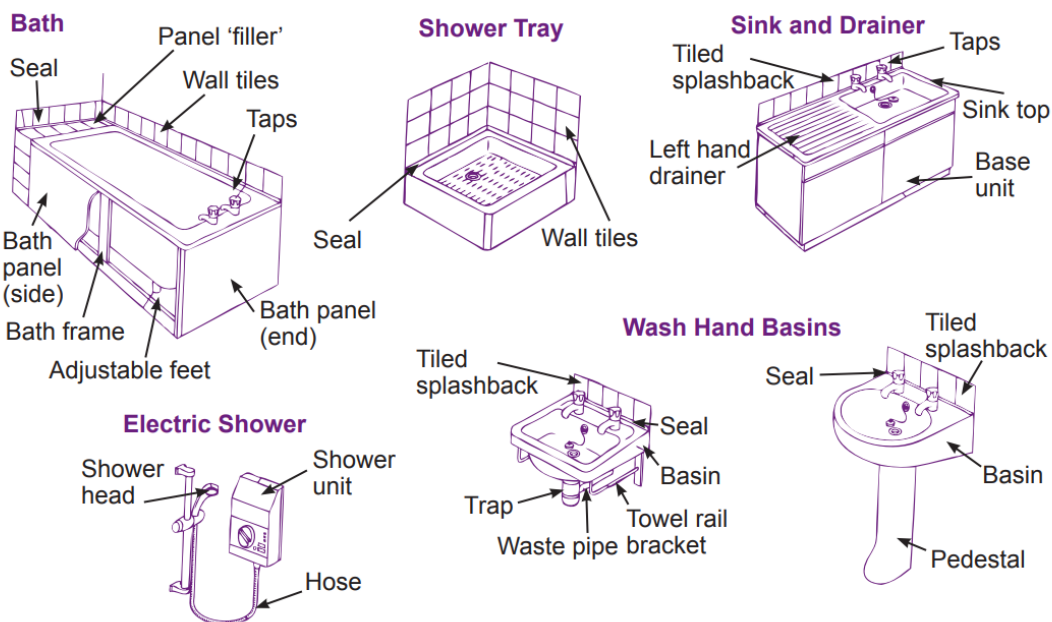
## Your responsibilities

- Trying to clear blocked baths, basins, showers and sinks. See 'Handy hints' later in this guide
- Replacing plugs and chains on baths, basin and sinks (may exclude some sheltered schemes)
- Cleaning and removing scale from shower heads
- Repairing any items you have installed yourself, for example shower, extra tiles.



## Advice

- For water leaks or tap problems, see the 'Taps and water pipes' and 'Drains and wastes' later in this guide
- A blocked waste pipe is not an emergency. You must try to clear it yourself before you call us. See Handy hints later in this guide. We will charge you for clearing blockages caused by items such as toys, hair, cooking fat and so on.
- We expect you to take action to prevent drains becoming blocked. See 'Handy hints' later in this guide
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.



## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: bathroom fittings loose or broken; waste pipe leaking or blocked; splash back wall tiles cracked or broken?
- If a panel, is it a side panel or the end? Is it made of plastic or hardboard?
- If a bath or basin, what is it made of: plastic, ceramic or metal?
- If tiles, what shape size and colour are they?

# Doors and locks

## Your responsibilities

- Replacing keys, fobs or locks when keys are lost or broken, or you get locked out
- Getting extra keys or fobs cut and gaining entry to your home if you get locked out
- Fitting or replacing handles, latches, chains, bells, spy holes or extra locks
- Repairing or replacing handles, catches or knobs on cupboards
- Adjusting doors, particularly when you fit new carpets or laminate flooring
- Replacing broken or cracked glass, unless you have a police crime number.

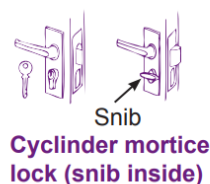
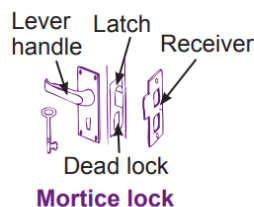
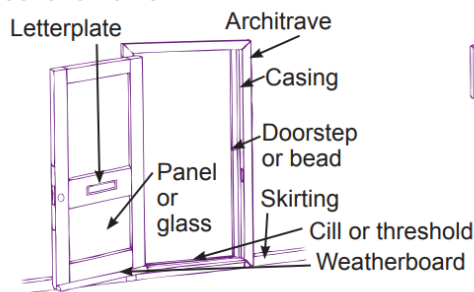
## Advice

- If you or a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair
- If the repair is an emergency we will make the property safe and secure. Any further work necessary will be done as an urgent or routine repair
- If a problem is caused by criminal behaviour, you should report it to the police. We will do work to make your home safe. We will only do further work if you provide us with a police crime number (not an incident number)
- You should not add your own door furniture – such as handles, letterboxes – if you have one of our fire rated doors. You should contact us first.

## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: lock stiff or not fitting properly in the keep; lock or handle broken; door sticking, not closing properly or damaged?
- Which door is it: front, back or side, or a patio door? Is it a communal door? What type of lock or latch does it have? Is the property still secure?
- What is the door made of: wood, plastic (Upvc) or metal?
- What type of lock it is: mortice, cylinder mortice, rim lock, multi-point or cylinder right latch (Yale or Union)?

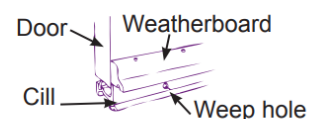
### Door and frame



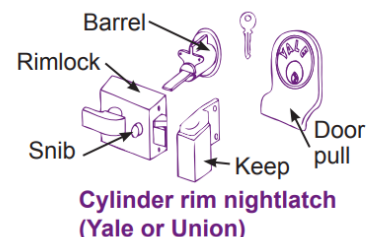
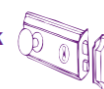
### Door hinges



### Stormguard cill



### Rimlock



### Multi-point lock

# Drains and waste

## Your responsibilities

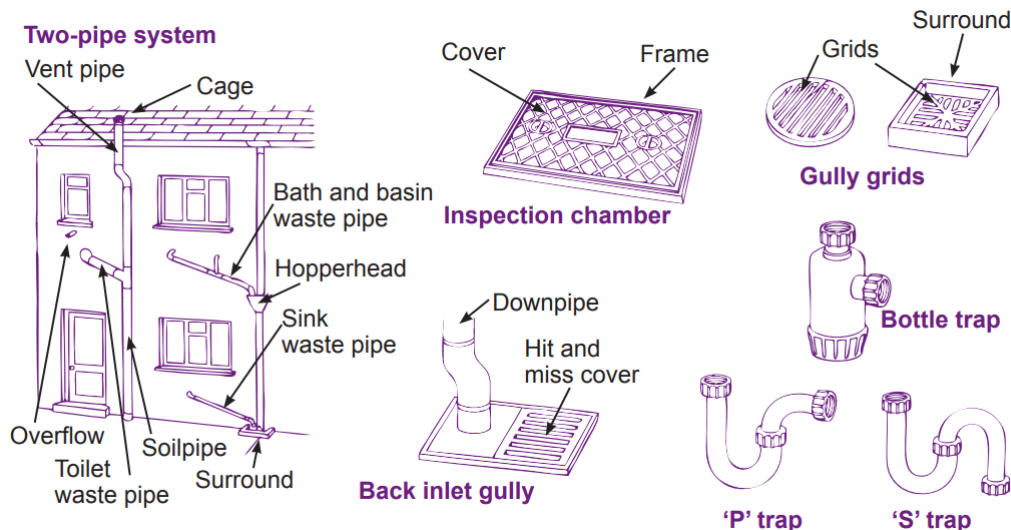
- Trying to clear blocked baths, basins, sinks, showers or toilets
- Clearing blockages or repairing leaks from washing machines or dishwashers
- Keeping gully grids clear of leaves and rubbish
- Cleaning waste pipes and drains regularly to prevent blockages

## Advice

- You are expected to try and clear blockages yourself before calling us. See Handy Hints later in this guide
- A blocked waste pipe is not an emergency. A blocked toilet is only an emergency if you have no other toilet you can use
- Keep your waste pipes and drains clear by regularly flushing them with hot water and using domestic cleaning products
- Do not pour fat or any kind of oil down sinks, toilets or outside drains
- If a blockage is caused by items such as nappies, air fresheners, condoms, tampons and so on, we will charge you for the cost of clearing it.

## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: waste pipe or trap blocked or leaking; drain smelling or blocked; gully blocked or grid missing?
- If a waste pipe, which it is: bath, basin, sink, shower or toilet?
- If a waste pipe is blocked: is it more than one fitting blocked, or if you live in a block of flats, are other flats affected?
- If the drain is blocked, is it overflowing?
- If a gully grid, is it round or square? What is it made of: metal or plastic?





# Electrics

## Your responsibilities

- Resetting trip switches, and if necessary, turning off the mains supply
- Replacing light bulbs, fluorescent tubes and starters (except communal areas)
- Testing and cleaning any smoke and carbon monoxide detectors provided by us.

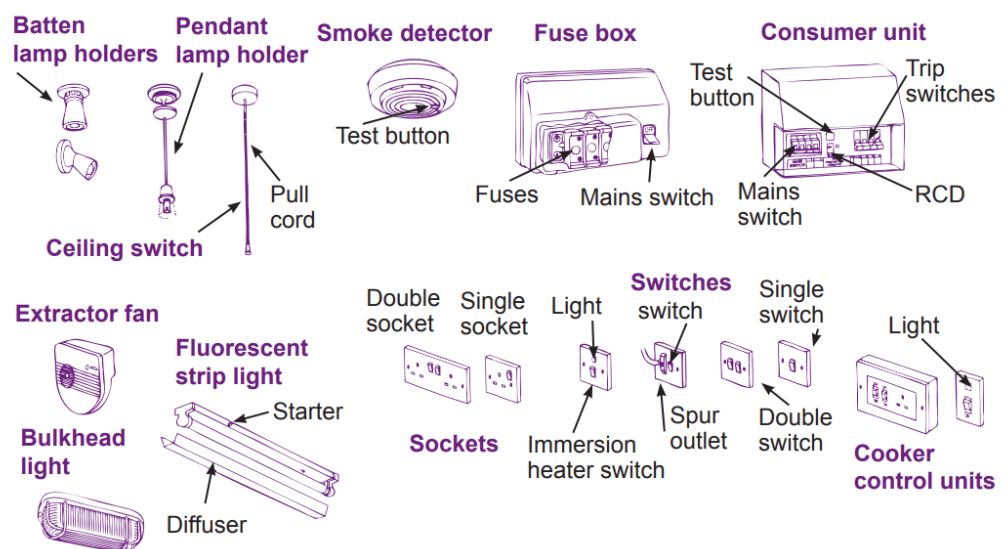


## Advice

- Do not remove, change or add any electrical fittings without our written permission
- Do not touch bare wires and do not touch sockets or switches with wet hands. Also if water is leaking onto electrical fittings or a fitting is dangerous, do not use or touch any switches connected to it. Contact us immediately
- Make sure that you know where the trip switches are located in your home and understand how to reset them. See 'Handy hints' later in this guide
- If you have no power it may be because you have not paid your bill or do not have enough credit on your meter. Or it may be a power cut- check with your neighbours. For power cuts you need to contact your electricity supplier's emergency number. If you call us out we will charge you for the call out.

## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: no lights or power in part of, or throughout, the property; light or light switch not working; socket loose or broken?
- What type of fitting or socket is it?
- Are other homes in your block or near buildings affected?
- Are there any other connected problems?



# Floors and stairs

## Your responsibilities

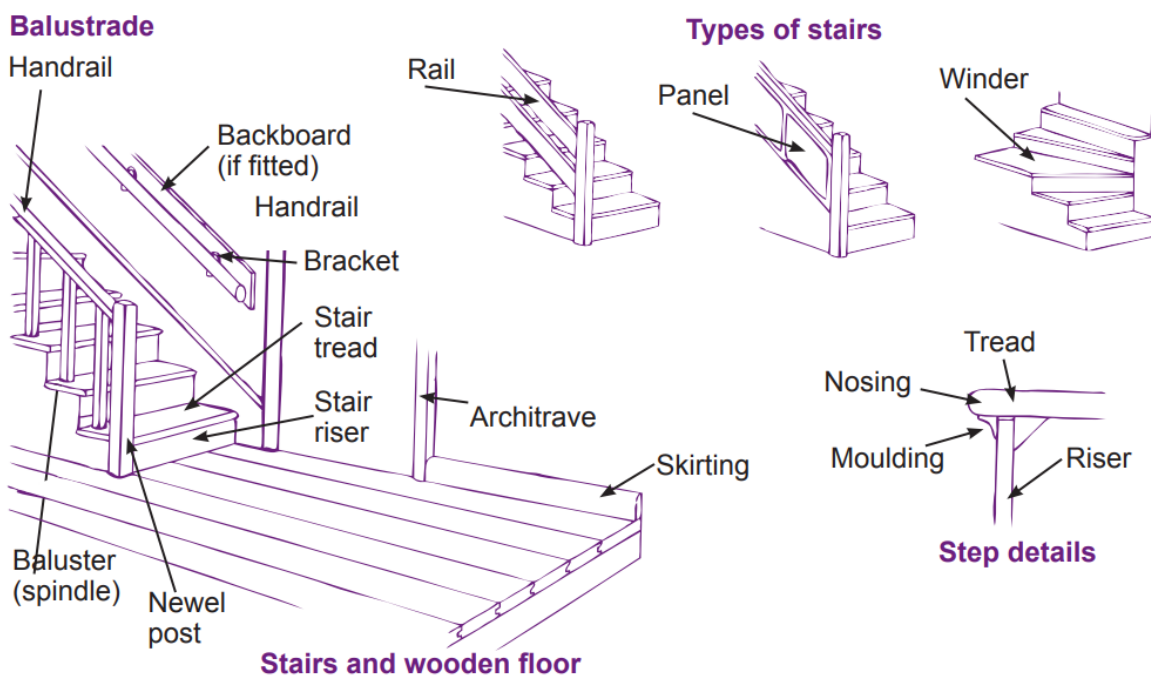
- Repairing any floor covering you have fitted and, if necessary, lifting it to allow us to carry out a repair underneath

## Advice

- We will not accept responsibility for damage to your carpets or other floor coverings. If we tell you that you need to lift your own floor covering (including laminate flooring), you should do this before the repair operative arrive. If you are difficulties arranging this, please let us know.
- If you lay carpets these should ideally be held down with gripper rods. This makes it easier for you to lift them for repairs without damaging them.
- If you have damaged floor tiles, we will try to get matching tiles but this is often not possible. We may just take up the remaining tiles.
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.

## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: floorboard or skirting loose or damaged; tread, riser or nosing broken; floor covering lifting and damaged?
- What is the floor made of: floorboards, chipboard, hardboard or concrete?
- What type of flooring is it, for example: quarry tiles (red), plastic tiles or sheeting, or slip resistant flooring? Is it in a communal area?
- How many boards, panels or tiles are affected?
- If stair nosing, is it on communal stairs? Is it plastic, metal or rubber?



# Garages

## Your responsibilities

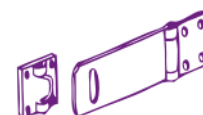
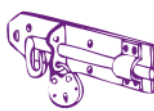
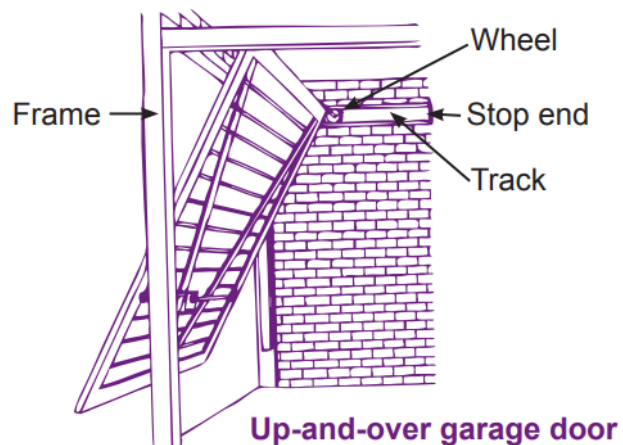
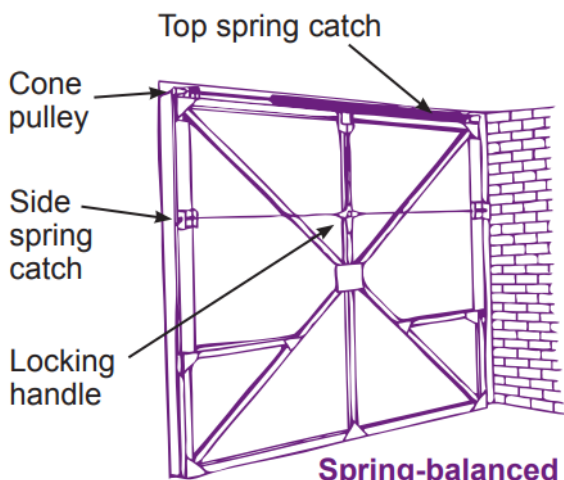
- Replacing keys or locks to garages when keys are lost or broken
- Gaining entry to your garage if you get locked out.

## Advice

- If a problem is caused by criminal behaviour, you should report it to the police. We will only do work if you provide us with a police crime number (not an incident number)
- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or a pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.
- If your garage is separate from your home, you need to explain how we can find it and get in
- If a garage cannot be locked, you are responsible for the security of anything inside. You must not leave any dangerous items in it (such as petrol, oil, bottled gas or other materials) that could explode or catch fire.

## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: garage door jammed, frame damaged; roof damaged or leaking?
- Is the car stuck inside?
- Is it the garage roof, what type is it: corrugated, tiled or flat? If corrugated, what it is it made of: metal or some other material?





# Gutters

## Your responsibilities

- Keeping gully grids clear of leaves and rubbish

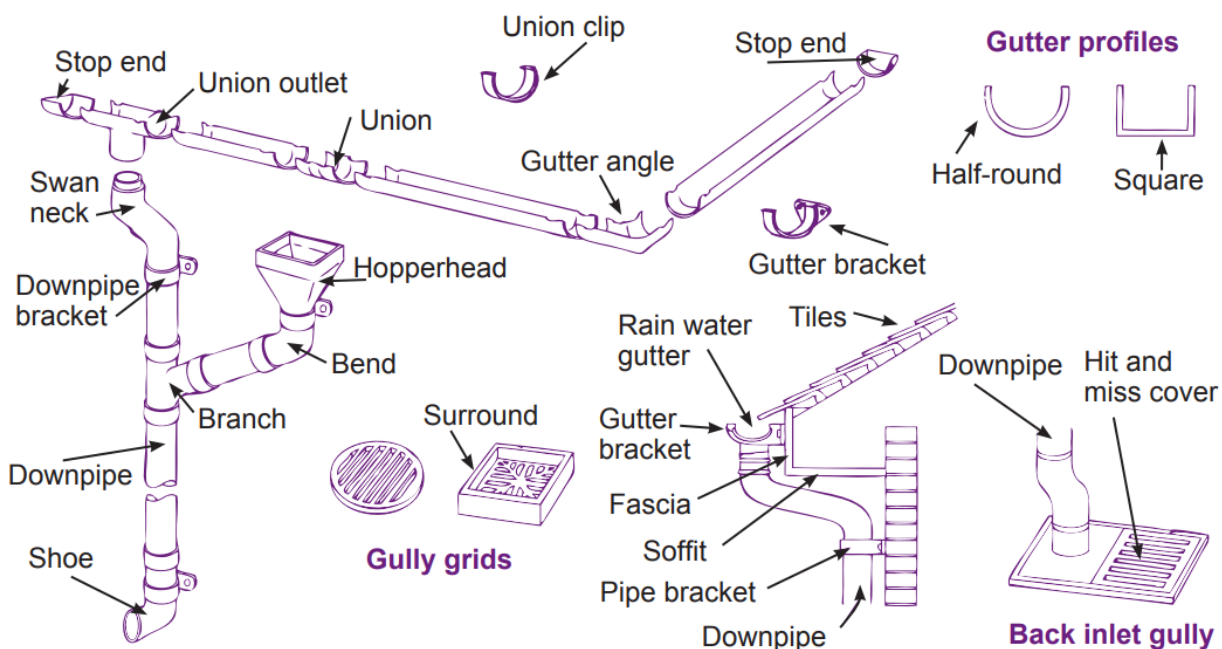
## Advice

- We may need to put up scaffolding for certain types of gutter repair.
- In bad weather conditions repair operatives cannot work at height, for example on ladders, scaffolding or on the roof. This is for their own safety.



## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: gutter or down pipe loose, leaking or blocked; bracket, joint or shoe loose or broken?
- Which gutter or downpipe is it: front, back or side?
- What is it made of: plastic, cast iron, aluminum or concrete?
- What shape is it: half round or square? What colour is it?
- If a gully grid: is it round or square? What is it made of: metal or plastic?
- How many storeys high is the building?
- Are there any other connected problems?
- What is the gutter or downpipe made of: metal, plastic or concrete?



# Heating

## Your responsibilities

- If you smell gas, contact the Gas Emergency Service immediately on 0800 111999. See 'Emergencies' later in this guide. Any other problems with your gas appliances will be dealt with by our gas contractor.

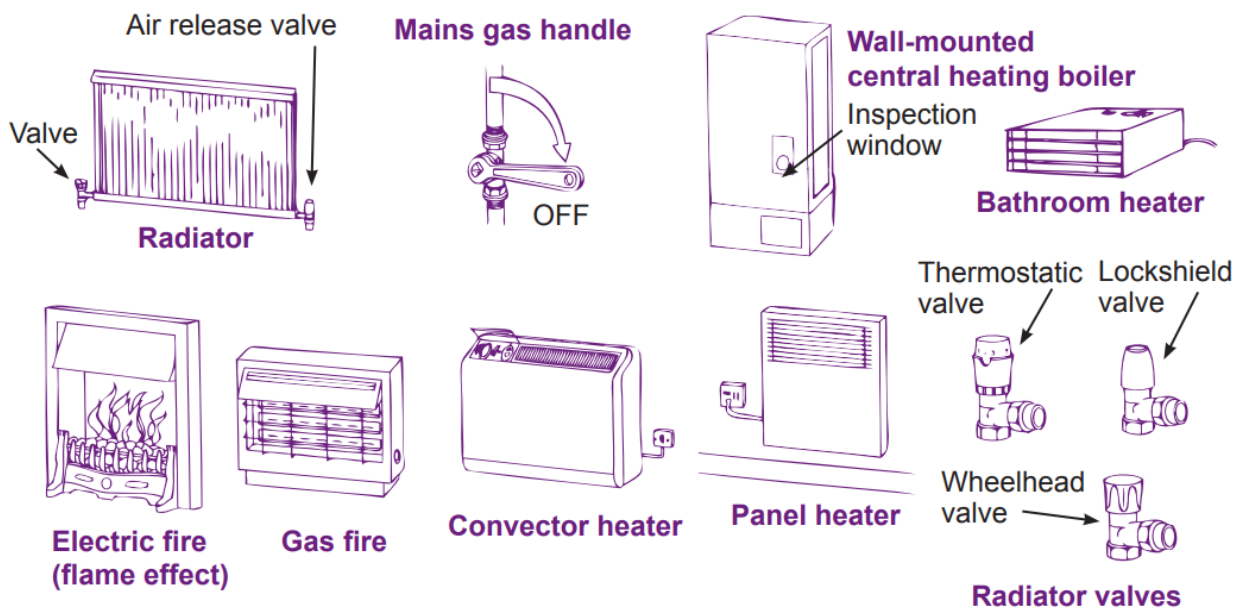
## Advice

- We respond to heating breakdowns within 24 hours of your call. If the heating is not working by the end of the day in winter, we will provide you with temporary heating, unless you have some other form of heating.
- We expect you to keep your home properly heated and ventilated to prevent condensation. See 'Handy hints' later in this guide
- If a radiator is leaking and loose because you have been doing redecoration work, you will be charged for the cost of the repair.



## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: central heating not working; no hot water, radiator leaking or not getting warm; fire or heater not working?
- What type of system is it: gas or electric?
- If electric, what type is it: storage heaters, panel heaters or warm air?
- Have you any other form of heating or hot water heating, for example: electric immersion heater?
- If a radiator: is it warm at the bottom and cold at the top?



# Kitchen fittings

## Your responsibilities

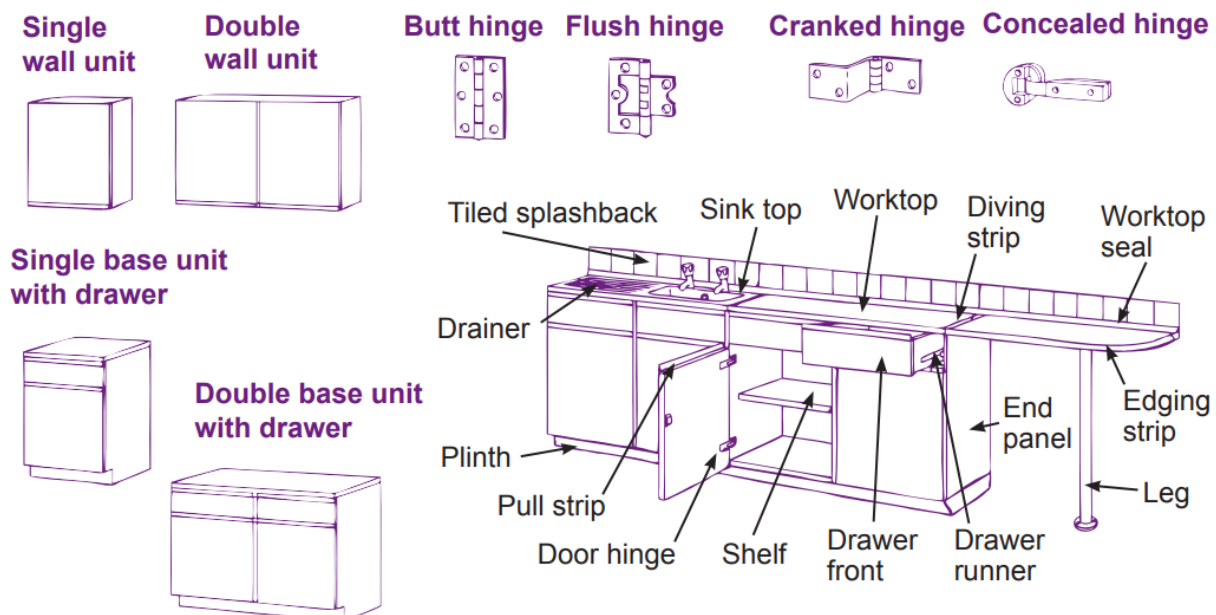
- Repairing any extra kitchen units you have installed
- Repairing or replacing handles, catches or knobs on kitchen units
- Installing any washing machines, dishwashers or tumble driers, including the water, supply pipes and vents if not already provided. See 'Advice' below
- Clearing any blockages in your washing machine or dishwasher
- Fitting pipe work for the supply of water to dishwashers and washing machines, and fitting vents for tumble driers, if not already provided.

## Advice

- Do not paint your kitchen units
- If you, a member of your family or a visitor cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair
- If we have to replace kitchen units or parts, such as the worktop, drawer or door, or wall tiles, we will try to match the colour, but this may not be possible.
- If you install a washing machine, dishwasher or tumble drier, you are responsible for any water supply, waste or vent connections that you have fitted to them and for clearing any blockages.

## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example; wall or floor tile loose or damaged; worktop loose or broken; cupboard door or drawer damaged; hinge broken?
- What type of unit is it: wall or floor? Is it a tall unit or a corner unit? Is it a single or double unit?
- If wall tiles, what shape, size and colour are they?





# Taps and water pipes

## Your responsibilities

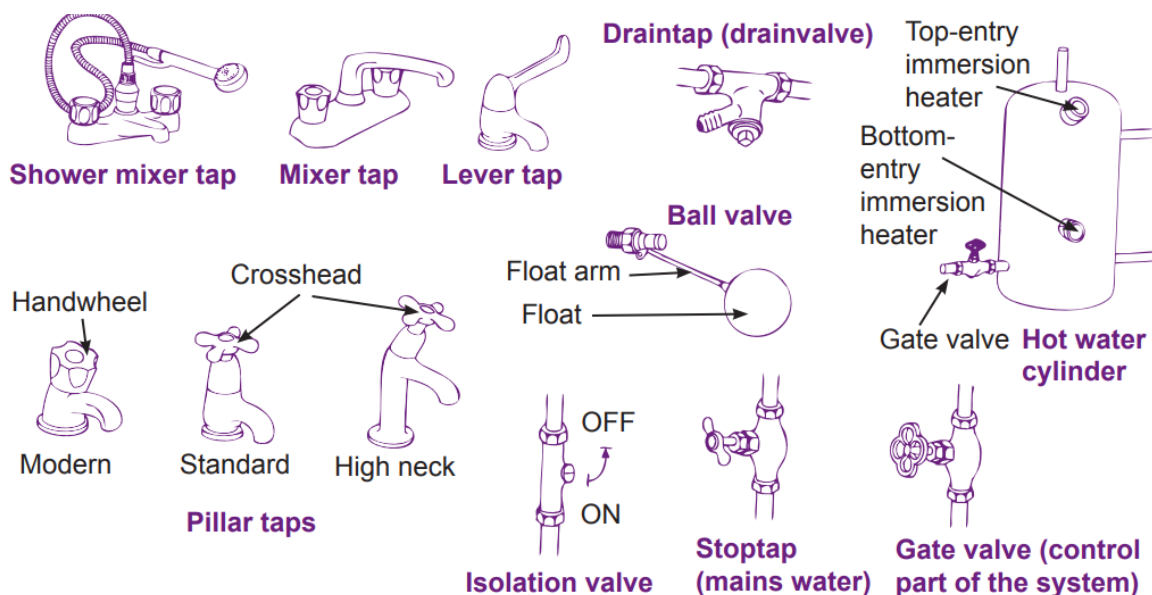
- Turning off your water supply at the stop tap if a water pipe has burst, and then turning on all taps to allow remaining water to flow out
- Fitting pipe work for the supply of water to washing machines or dishwashers, if not already provided.

## Advice

- Find out where the stop tap is so you can turn the water off in an emergency. If you can't find it, contact us and we will tell you. You may have a push button stop tap or a tap at your property.
- If water is leaking onto electrical fittings, do not touch them. Turn the 'mains' switch on the consumer unit to the 'OFF' position to turn off the electricity. See 'Handy hints' later in this guide
- If a pipe has burst we will carry out the repair, but we do not redecorate or replace damaged carpets or so on.
- If water leaks from your washing machine or as a result of an accident, you must get it repaired, but you may be able to reclaim this cost on your contents insurance. If you call us out we will charge you for the call-out and any other damage to the structure of the building, such as floorboards.

## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: no water, water not getting hot, pipe leaking or burst; overflow running or broken; tap dripping or faulty?
- If water is leaking into your property: is it coming from the flat above? What is the address? Are there any other connected problems?
- If no water: do your neighbours have water or not?
- If a tap, what type is it?



# Toilets

## Your responsibilities

- Repairing or replacing toilet seats
- Replacing broken flush chains
- Trying to clear blocked toilets. See 'Handy hints' later in this guide

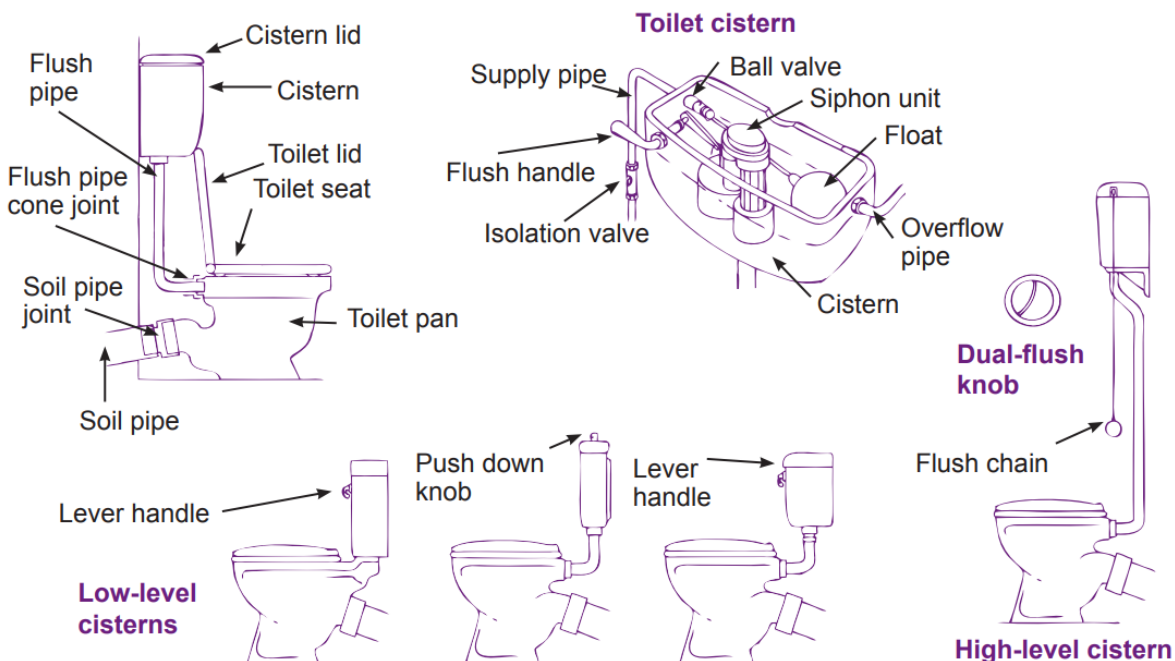


## Advice

- A blocked toilet is only an emergency if you have no other toilet you can use
- If a blockage is caused by items such as nappies, air fresheners, condoms, tampons and so on, we will charge you for the cost of clearing it
- We recommend you clean and clear your toilet regularly using domestic cleaning products. Always follow instructions carefully.

## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: toilet blocked; overflow running; cistern leaking; pan cracked or leaning; flush handle or chain broke?
- What type of cistern is it: high level or low level? If low level, is it a flush panel, close-coupled or standard type?
- What type of flushing mechanism does it have: lever handle, push down knob or chain? If a push down knob, is it a dual flush knob?
- If a blocked toilet is in a block of flats, are any other flats affected?
- If a soil pipe, how is it fitted: out through the wall or down through the floor?



# Walls and ceilings

## Your responsibilities

- Filling minor cracks in walls and ceilings
- Fitting curtain rails, pelmets, picture rails and coat hooks.

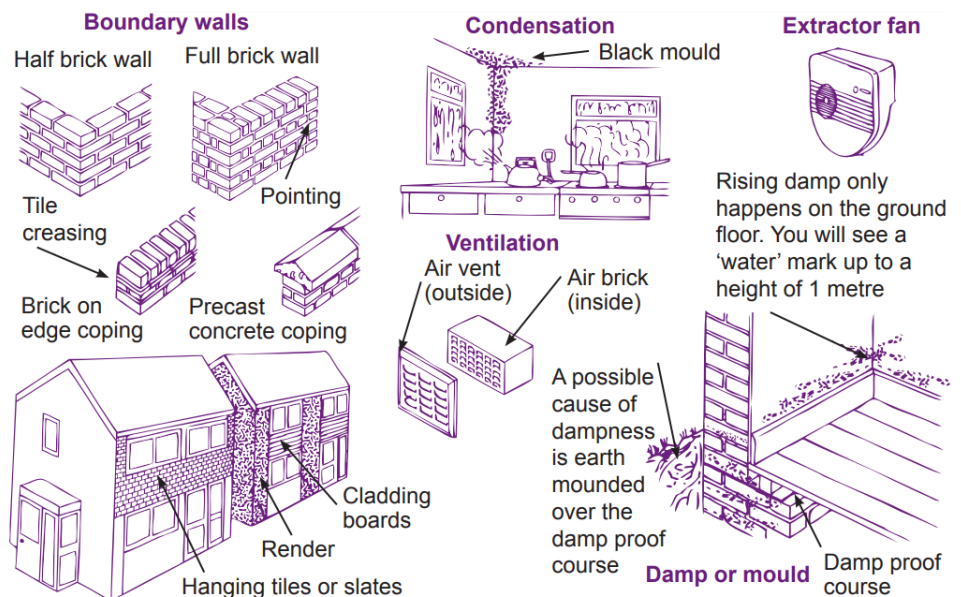
## Advice

- If you, a member of your family, a visitor or pet cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair
- We expect you to control the build-up of moisture in your home to prevent damp and mould appearing on the walls and ceiling. See handy hints later in this guide. In particular, you should keep air vents clear and use extractor fans (where provided) to prevent condensation
- You can paint and wallpaper any walls inside your home, but you must get our permission to paint any outside walls
- Do not grow shrubs or climbing plants near or against house walls. These can damage brickworks and drains, and cause damp problems.



## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: wall plaster loose or crumbling; ceiling plaster bulging; condensation or mould on walls and ceiling?
- Is there any damage caused by water leaking?
- If it is an outside wall, what is it made of: brick or concrete blocks, or what type of wall surface does it have: render (pebbledash or smooth), concrete panels, upvc boards, timber boards, or hanging tiles or slates?
- If wall tiles (inside), what shape, size and colour are they?



# Windows

## Your responsibilities

- Replacing broken or cracked glass, unless you have a police crime number
- Fitting window locks, unless they are already provided as part of the window handles.

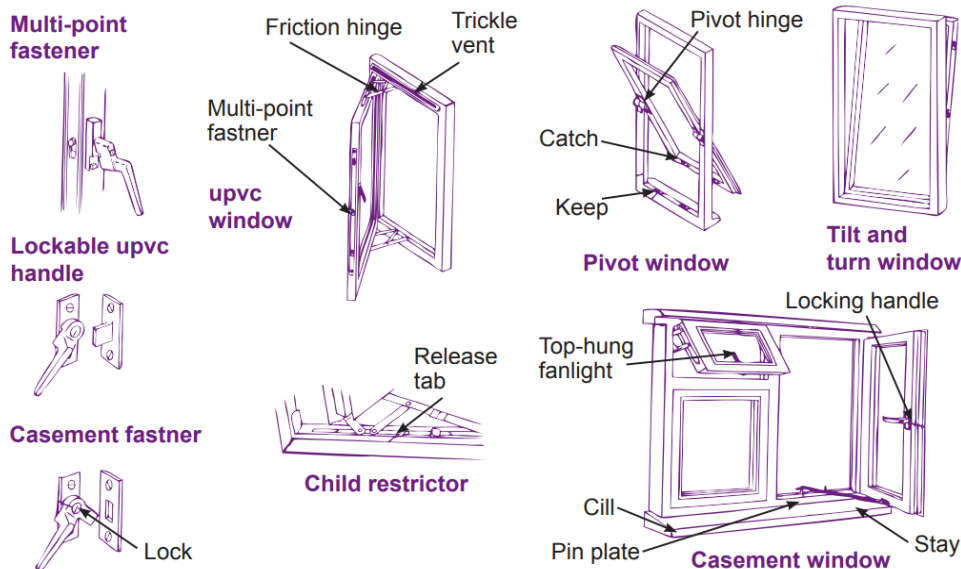


## Advice

- Please wipe off condensation from your window frames
- If a problem is caused by criminal behaviour, you should report it to the police. We will do work to make your home safe. We will only do further work if you provide us with a police crime number (not an incident number)
- You should keep widow trickle vents clear and use them to prevent condensation
- If you, a member of your family or a visitor cause damage and we have to repair it, you will have to pay for the cost of the repair.

## We need to know

- What is the problem, for example: glass cracked or broken; frame loose or jammed; stay or fastener broken?
- What type of frame is it: wooden, plastic (UPVC) or metal?
- What style of window is it: casement, tilt and turn or pivot?
- What type of glass is it, for example: plain, obscure (frosted) or wired? Is it double glazed?
- Are there any other connected problems?
- If a fastener, what type is it, for example: multipoint, casement or other type?





## Fences and boundaries

Our fences and boundaries policy is used to provide a framework by which a consistent application of the council's position on boundary responsibilities can be practised by staff. It clearly sets out the obligations of both Charnwood Borough Council and its tenants and leaseholders in respect of boundaries and fencing at tenanted properties and communal areas.

The installation and maintenance responsibilities of the council and its tenants are set out in the table below:

Boundary	Scenario	Boundary structure ownership/ Maintenance responsibility
Back garden between two tenanted properties (front/back; side/side etc.)	At void there is no boundary structure.	The council will mark the boundary using four-foot/1.2m chain-link fencing with concrete posts and, in respect of adjoining properties, a six-foot/1.8m-square timber privacy screen along the line of the party wall at the rear of the property. Thereafter the maintenance will fall to the tenants either side of the two properties' dividing fence.
	Original CBC provided fence (including post and wire/chain-link) /hedge/wall etc and its maintenance.	The maintenance will fall to the tenants either side of the two properties' dividing boundary.
	Tenant-erected boundary structure.	Maintenance will fall to the tenant who has erected the boundary structure.
	No boundary structure present	The council will mark the boundary using four foot/1.2m chain-link fencing with concrete posts and, in respect of adjoining properties, a six-foot/1.8m- square timber privacy screen along the line of the party wall at the rear of the property. Thereafter the maintenance will fall to the tenants either side of the two properties' dividing fence.



<b>Boundary</b>	<b>Scenario</b>	<b>Boundary structure ownership/ Maintenance responsibility</b>
Between tenanted property and public highway/footpath	Front garden: no boundary structure.	Tenant's responsibility. The council will generally not install a front garden fence.
	Front garden: existing boundary structure.	Tenant's responsibility.
	Side and rear of property: no boundary structure.	A fence will be erected by the council, that is appropriate to the context and any planning restrictions in place. Thereafter the maintenance will fall to the tenant.
	Side and rear of property: existing boundary structure.	Tenants' responsibility
Between tenanted property and garage site / field / commercial premises / open land etc.	Side and rear of property no boundary structure.	A fence will be erected by the council, that is appropriate to the context and any planning restrictions in place. The council will maintain this structure.
	Existing boundary structure.	The council will maintain the boundary structure.
Between tenanted property and another privately owned property: title not proven / or another privately owned property: title belonging to CBC	Side and rear of property no boundary structure.	The council will mark the boundary using four-foot/1.2m chain-link fencing with concrete posts and, in respect of adjoining properties, a six-foot/1.8m- square timber privacy screen along the line of the party wall at the rear of the property. Thereafter the maintenance will fall to the tenant.
	Side and rear of property - existing boundary structure.	Tenant's responsibility.
Fencing and gates in communal areas	Not applicable.	The council will maintain this boundary structure.
Gates at tenanted property	Front , side and back	Tenant's responsibility. The council will generally not install or maintain gates.

Generally, where the council determines it is responsible for demarking a boundary, a four foot/1.2m chain link fence with concrete posts will be installed. Where this is not appropriate an alternative type of fence that is suitable will be installed.

Boundary structures installed by the tenant will be maintained by the tenant.

A full copy of our fencing and boundary policy can be found on the Council's website at [www.charnwood.gov.uk/fencing](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/fencing).

# Handy hints – Clearing a blocked waste

## General advice

- Blockages in basins and sinks are usually caused by the build-up of waste in the trap: fat, tea leaves, hair, cooking oil and so on. We advise you to clear waste pipes and traps at least once a month with a domestic cleaning product. Always follow the instructions carefully. Do not use caustic soda as it destroys plastic fittings
- The trap always holds some water which stops air or foul smells coming up the drains. However, waste can build up and become stuck in it
- If more than one fitting (bath, basin or sink) is blocked, the blockage may be in the soil stack or main drain. This will need to be cleared by us. Contact us
- Blockages in toilets are usually caused by unusual objects: nappies, toys or toilet fresheners. You must not use toilets as rubbish or waste disposers.

## What to do

### You need:

- Bowl or bucket
- Jug or cup to be used as a scoop
- Wet rag or dishcloth
- Plunger – for the toilet you can use a toilet brush or mop
- Protective gloves.

### To unblock a bath, basin or sink

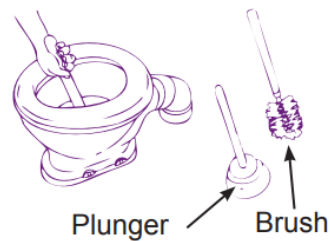
- Scoop out most of the water
- Hold the rag tightly over the overflow opening
- Place the plunger over the plug hole and pump it up and down rapidly.

### To unblock a toilet

- If the pan is already full, remove some of the water into a bucket using some form of a scoop, for example a jug or a cup
- Push the brush or a plunger to the bottom of the pan
- Pump it up and down vigorously about 10 times. This creates a vacuum and pressure, which may shift the blockage
- Flush the toilet to see whether the blockage has gone.

You may need to repeat this process several times before the toilet flushes normally. If there is no improvement after a couple of attempts, you should contact us. Thoroughly wash your hands and all equipment after you have finished.

#### Unblocking a toilet



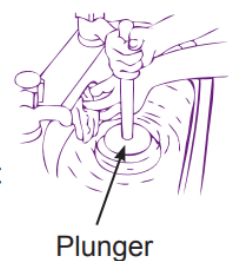
#### Bottle trap



#### U-bend trap



#### Unblocking a basin or sink



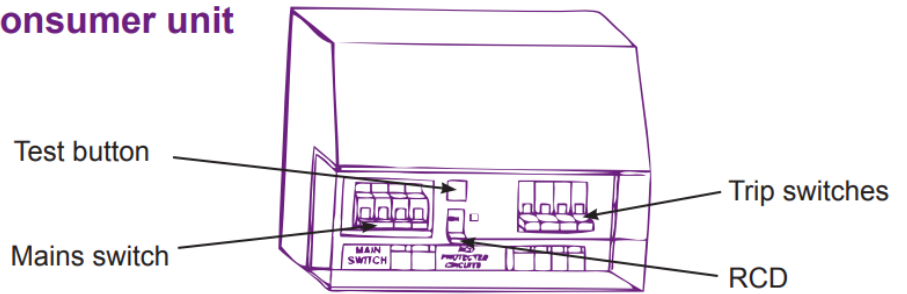
## Handy hints – Resetting a trip switch

If your lights or power go off, it means your trip switches are working properly. You can find out what caused the problem and sort it out easily.

### General advice

- If you are at all unsure, please contact us
- Modern electric circuits are fitted with circuit breakers called trip switches. If a fault develops, a switch is tripped and the circuit is broken. You will find all of the trip switches (fuses) in the consumer unit. Some consumer units have buttons rather than the switches
- If one of your electrical appliances is faulty, leave it unplugged and get a qualified electrician or service engineer to check it
- If a wall or ceiling light is faulty, keep it switched off ( put some tape over the switch) and contact us
- Blockages in toilets are usually caused by unusual objects: nappies, toys or toilet fresheners. You must not use toilets as rubbish or waste disposers
- Make sure your hands are dry when they touch electrical fittings.

### Consumer unit



### A trip switch or button usually operates because:

- There are too many appliances on a circuit and it is overloaded
- An appliance is faulty or has been misused, such as a kettle has been over-filled or a toaster not cleaned
- Water has leaked into a circuit or split onto a plug
- A light bulb has blown or an immersion heater is faulty.

### To reset the circuit:

- Open the cover on the consumer unit to expose the trip switches/buttons
- Check which switches or buttons have tripped to the OFF position and which rooms (circuit) have been affected
- Put these switches or button to the ON position.

If it trips again, it is probably being caused by a faulty appliance or light. You need to identify which circuit is being affected and which appliance on that circuit is causing the problem:

- Check all the rooms and note which set of lights and sockets is not working
- Unplug all appliances on that problem circuit, and switch off the immersion heater
- Switch the tripped switch to the ON position (press in if it is a button)
- Plug in the appliances or switch on each light one at a time until the trip goes again. Do not use adaptors or multi-plug extensions when testing appliances.



## Handy hints – About your smoke detector

We provide a smoke detector in every home. You should regularly remove dust from the vents by using the nozzle of your vacuum cleaner.

### If the alarm goes off

- Take your family to where is easy to escape in case there is a fire
- Check all rooms for signs of smoke
- Feel around each door before opening. If there is any sign of heat, smoke or noise, don't open the door.

### If a fire has broken out

- Do not attempt to tackle it yourself. Smoke and fumes can kill in minutes
- Get everyone out of the house and call the fire service (999 or 112) unless you live in a scheme where there is a stay put procedure
- Don't go back in for any reason.

### If there is no sign of smoke or fire

Something may have caused the alarm to operate in error and you may need to reset it. This can happen if:

- A heater or clothes drier is too near it
- Someone smokes a cigarette or pipe near it or an aerosol spray is used near it
- There are a lot of cooking fumes or steam: roasting meat or burnt toast
- There are strong draughts from nearby doors or windows
- The battery is low.

If you can't find out why it has gone off, contact us.

Never disconnect the alarm. This will put you and your family at risk.

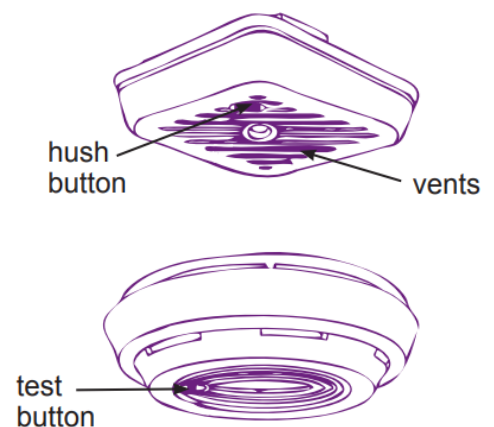
### To reset the alarm

- If it has a HUSH button, press the button. The alarm will stop for ten seconds, but then it beeps every 40 seconds. If the problem does not clear after ten minutes the alarm will continue
- If there is no HUSH button, turn off the electricity supply at the consumer unit (fuse box) for at least 15 minutes. Then switch the electricity back on.

### To test your alarm

- Press and hold the test button for a few seconds. The alarm should sound. If the alarm does not sound, try cleaning it. Use the nozzle of your vacuum cleaner to do this. Test your alarm again, and if the alarm does not sound, contact us.

#### Smoke detectors



## Handy hints – About your carbon monoxide detector

We provide a carbon monoxide detector wherever there is a fixed combustion appliance, i.e. a gas fire or a gas-fired central heating boiler. Do not move these devices in any circumstances.

Carbon monoxide (often shortened to 'CO') is known as the 'silent killer'. The gas is odourless and it can only exist when fuel is burned.

We provide a smoke detector in every home. You should regularly remove dust from the vents by using the nozzle of your vacuum cleaner.

### If your CO alarm sounds

- open all the windows and ventilate
- turn off or shut down any coal/wood/ gas fire and boiler
- report the alarm going off to us.

If your alarm is making a regular noise/ flashing then the power source may need replacing or repairing.

If this happens or if you have any other concerns about your CO alarm please contact us.



# Damp and mould in your home

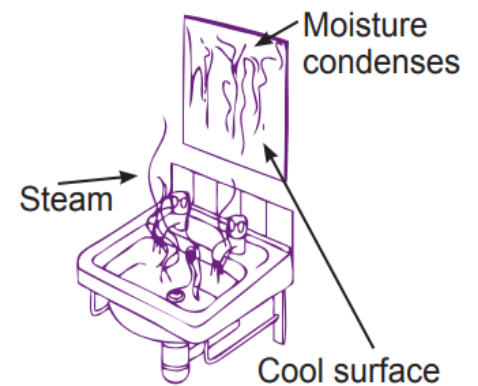
Damp and mould can be a serious problem in your home but it's often difficult to know exactly what is causing it. The information below should help you understand the difference between damp and condensation and what to do if you find you have damp and/or mould problems.

## Do I have condensation problems?

- Condensation starts as moisture that is produced by (for example) cooking, washing or drying clothes indoors on radiators
- This moist air turns into water (condenses) on cool surfaces, such as walls, mirrors, wall tiles and windows, and even on some clothes
- When moist air is warm, it rises and often ends up on ceilings and upstairs rooms, where it forms mould.

Typical signs of condensation include:

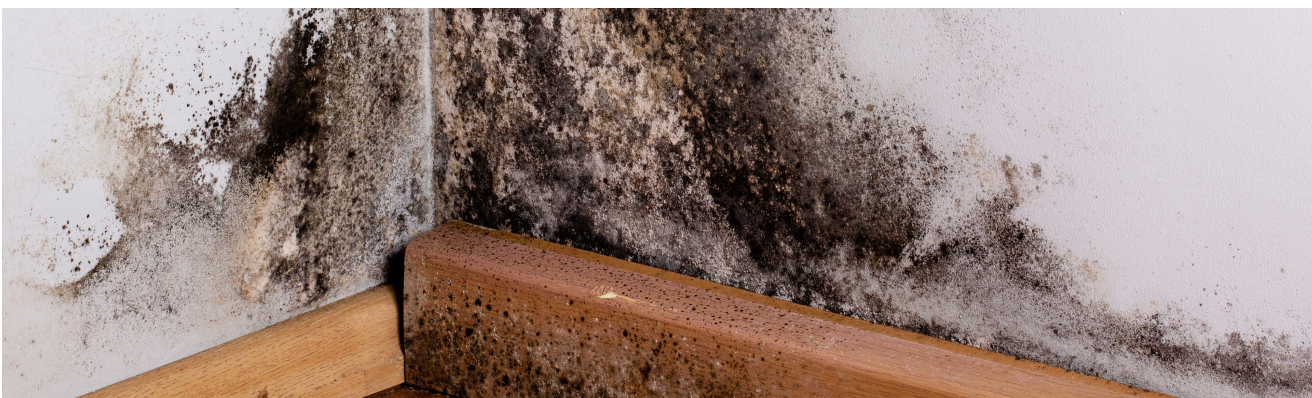
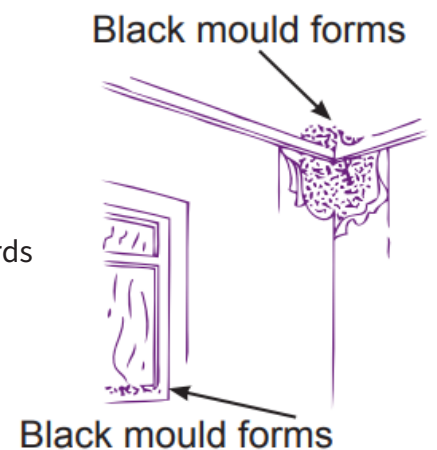
- Seasonal between September to March/April
- Water trickling down the inside of windows
- Damp patches on the wall especially behind furniture and in corners
- Wallpaper peeling off
- Black dots on window frames
- Mould growth/black mould starting to appear
- Soft furnishings and fabrics become prone to mould or mildew.



## Do I have rising damp?

Typical signs of rising damp include:

- Damp patches that start at the base of a wall and gradually move upwards
- Skirting boards or plaster that are damp or rotting
- Floor coverings such as tiles, vinyl or carpet that are wet or lifting
- Peeling paint or wallpaper lifting from the bottom of the wall
- Yellow or brown tide marks of staining on the wall



## **The signs of penetrating damp are similar to rising damp and condensation.**

Typical signs of penetrating damp include:

- Staining to external walls
- Damaged decoration, deterioration and staining on internal walls
- Damaged plaster, wet and crumbling, blistering, disintegration
- Rotting floorboards and skirting
- Localised dampness, random damp patches at high to low levels that grow in size when in contact with moisture
- Mould growth visible and a musty smell
- Drips, puddles, pooled water
- Brick damage, damage to the brickwork can allow moisture in.

## **What are the health implications?**

- Mould spores, dust mites, pet hair and tobacco smoke are triggers which can worsen asthma and chest conditions and can affect your mental health and wellbeing
- A prolonged exposure to these allergens can also increase a sensitivity reaction such as sneezing, runny nose, eczema, coughs and wheezing, particularly for those aged 14 and under
- House dust mites droppings can cause a sensitive reaction when breathed in.

## **Tips to reduce moisture**

- Leave trickle vents (slotted vents in the window or window frames) open when rooms are occupied even in the winter when your heating is on.
- Open the windows when cooking, washing or bathing so that steam can escape (and leave them open for a while after you have finished).
- Open some windows in other rooms for a while each day and open any trickle vents fitted in your window frames. This allows a change of air
- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles to prevent mould forming
- Do not block air vents
- The kitchen and bathroom extractor fans should be used when cooking and showering and left on for a period of time afterwards. When using the kitchen or bathroom, try and keep the door closed when possible so that moist or stale air is contained within the room for the extractor fan to remove. While cooking, try and cover all pots and pans and avoid leaving anything on the boil for too long to help reduce the steam created
- Furniture should be kept clear of the external walls to allow better air circulation. If unable to keep well clear, keep at least a small gap between the walls and furniture, particularly against “cold walls” and allow ventilation of any cupboards to keep air flow moving



- Washing should not be dried indoors where possible. If this is not possible, use a room with an extractor fan in it and turn the fan on when the washing is drying or open the window of the room so that moisture can escape outside rather than circulate around your home. Close the door of the room where the clothes are drying. If you use a vented tumble dryer, make sure it is properly vented to an open window or door or through an outside wall
- As it is cold air that causes warm air to release moisture, try to keep heating levels within the property at a constant and moderate temperature
- Avoid using portable gas or paraffin heaters. They may keep you warm, but aside from being very expensive to run, the fuel they burn releases high levels of water vapour into your home, making it not only muggy and uncomfortable, but importantly also substantially increasing the risk of condensation
- Cover fish tanks and remember houseplants and pets also produce moisture.

## If mould forms

- Wipe it off immediately with water. Do not use washing up liquid
- Apply a recommended product available from a hardware or DIY store. Always follow the instructions carefully. Do not use bleach.

## Keep your house warm

- Take steps to prevent heat loss
- Maintain low background heat when the weather is cold or wet. This doesn't necessarily cost more than switching it on and off.

## What are we doing?

- If the problems regarding condensation damp and/or mould continue after following the above steps, contact the council and we will arrange a visit with one of our trained officers.
- We can also arrange for a specialist contractor to visit your home to undertake an investigation.
- From the investigation report we can then work to resolve the condensation and damp problems.

## Report damp and mould problems

Report damp and mould issues online at [www.charnwood.gov.uk/damp\\_and\\_mould](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/damp_and_mould). Alternatively, please call 01509 634666.

We recognise we don't always get things right, and if you are unhappy with the way we have dealt with a report of damp and / or mould you have already made, you can make a complaint to us or approach the housing ombudsman directly.

More information can be found on our complaints process webpage at [www.charnwood.gov.uk/complaints\\_process](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/complaints_process).





# Emergencies – what to do

## Gas (smell, leak or fumes)

Call the gas emergency service immediately on 0800 111 999. Use a phone outside your home; even using a mobile could spark an explosion. (For non-emergency gas repairs call 0800 389 8000)

Make sure you know where your mains gas tap is.

Turn off the gas and open windows. Turn the handle at the meter to the flat (horizontal ) position.

Don't smoke or switch anything electrical on or off until the problem is fixed.

## Smoke, fumes or your smoke detector alarm sounds

If you can smell or see smoke call 999 or 112 immediately

If there is no sign of smoke or fire, check whether the alarm has been set off by something else. See 'Handy hints' on page 28.

## Electricity

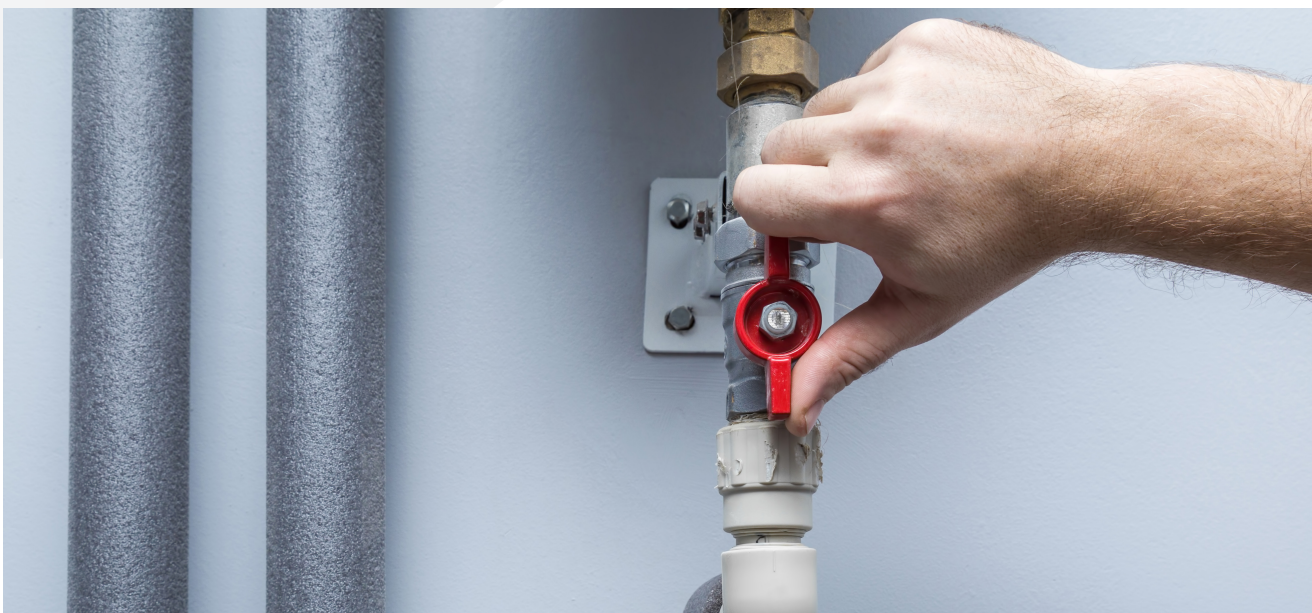
Make sure you know where your consumer unit (fuse box) is.

Turn the mains switch on the consumer unit (fuse box) to OFF. If you have a power cut, call the emergency number 105.

## Water

Make sure you know where your mains water stop tap is.

Turn the mains stop tap to the right (clockwise). If you have no water supply to the property phone Severn Trent Water on 0800 783 4444.





If you smell gas, call the gas emergency service immediately on **0800 111 999** and do the following:

- open doors and windows to ventilate the property
- turn off the gas at the mains tap. This can usually be located near the gas meter and has a handle that can be turned 90 degrees
- leave the property and let your neighbour's know

Book a repair, chase the progress of an existing repair and read the online version of this document by visiting [www.charnwood.gov.uk/repairs](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/repairs) or by using the QR code here:

