



Section 7 - Care of Your Home

This section contains information about looking after and living safely in your home.

Asbestos

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring fibrous minerals that have remarkable insulating and heat resistant properties. These were used extensively from the 1950's in a range of building materials. Any building constructed or refurbished before 1999 is likely to have some asbestos containing materials.

As long as it remains in good condition asbestos does not cause any harm. Asbestos is only a risk if it is disturbed and fibres are released into the air.

What does the Association do about asbestos?

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 require the Association to manage and control any risks from asbestos within our offices and the communal areas of our dwellings.

All offices and any common parts* of the Association's properties are surveyed to locate, as far as reasonably practicable, asbestos containing materials and assess their condition. The action to be taken will be decided taking into account the type, condition and location of the asbestos. It may be re-inspected at regular intervals, repaired, sealed, encapsulated or removed.

*Common parts, as defined by the regulations, include foyers, corridors, lifts and lift shafts, staircases, boiler houses, roof spaces, vertical risers, gardens, yards, garages and outhouses. It does not include communal dining rooms and lounges in sheltered accommodation. However, the Association has surveyed these areas as well.

If any actual or suspected asbestos is identified during any type of survey in a residential property, the resident(s) will be informed. The advice given will depend on the location and condition of the material and the action that is to be taken.

Where might you find asbestos?

Some of the most common uses of asbestos were in cement products used in the construction of garages, sheds, soffit boards, roof tiles and drainpipes; textured coatings such as artex; bath panels; floor tiles and toilet cisterns. These are not harmful if they are in a good state of repair and have not been damaged.

What should I do?

It is safe to clean and re-paint as long as the surface is in good condition and not sanded.

Do not attempt to remove, sand, scrape, wire brush or drill any surface that may contain asbestos.

Do not carry out any structural repairs or improvements without permission from the Association.



If you are concerned about any material in your home that you suspect may contain asbestos, please do not hesitate to contact the Association for information and advice. A copy of the Association's Asbestos Management policy is available on request.

Improvements

Can I make improvements to my home such as fitting a shower or a burglar alarm?

Yes, but the request must be in writing and permission given before work commences.

The Association will only refuse permission where there are good reasons e.g. the work is not in keeping with the rest of the dwelling or would make the house difficult to let in the future.

You may, however, be responsible for the ongoing repair and maintenance of any improvements.

Certain improvements qualify for the Right to Compensation and details of how to qualify for compensation can be obtained on request from your Housing Officer.

Satellite Dishes/TV Aerials

The Association is not responsible for the repair or replacement of TV aerials in houses and bungalows.

In flats and sheltered schemes where there is a communal aerial, the Association is responsible for the repair and replacement.

Satellite Dishes

The Association will consider any request for the installation of satellite dishes.

Permission will be granted subject to local planning regulations.

Cable TV

Prior to the installation of Cable TV, the Association may carry out a survey of the site.

Normally, permission will be given, but there may be occasions when, due to the level of disruption involved permission will be withheld.



Adaptations

If you are experiencing difficulties in your current accommodation due to a medical problem we may be able to help.

Examples of ways in which the Association may be able to help include:

- provision of handrails and lever taps
- installation of showers and ramps
- installation of stairlifts

There may be other adaptations more suitable to your individual requirements and advice is available from the Occupational Services Department of your local Council.

If you feel that your home needs adapting in any way, you should contact your Housing Officer who will give you detailed advice on the procedure to be followed.

A copy of the Association's policy on Disabled Adaptations is available on request from your Housing Officer or Bank Top House office.

Condensation

Condensation is steam or water vapour which turns into water (condenses) on

cold surfaces. Affected areas may show signs of mould growth and it can damage clothes, bedding, floor-coverings and decorations.

The following practical measures may help prevent condensation:

The way you use your home affects the amount of condensation you get. This does not mean that you should alter your habits drastically - just bear in mind the following tips:

- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors shut, particularly when cooking, washing or bathing.
- In winter, it is advisable to open windows for a short period of time to allow some ventilation.
- Try to leave some background heat on through the day in cold weather.
- Don't allow kettles and pans to boil away any longer than is necessary.
- Try to avoid drying clothes indoors particularly on radiators.
- Tumble driers should be vented where possible.
- Don't overfill cupboards and wardrobes. Leave some space to allow air to circulate.



If you have mould growth, you can get rid of mould by washing down the affected surfaces with a bleach type solution, and you can buy special paints which help to prevent it.

The Association has installed extractor fans in most properties in order to alleviate condensation.

These fans will operate automatically where there is moisture in the air and in some properties may be connected to the light switch in the bathroom.

The fan will continue to operate until the moisture level has dropped. They are extremely cheap to run and under no circumstances should they be tampered with.

Decoration

The Association is responsible for decorating the outside of your home; and any parts of the building you share with other residents.

You are responsible for the internal decoration of your home.

Gas Safety

Gas Appliances fitted by the Association are checked every year and comply with current Regulations so you should have no problems. A copy of your safety certificate will be given to you.

However, the following are some simple guidelines:

1. **NEVER** cover an appliance or block the vents
2. **NEVER** block or obstruct any fixed ventilation grilles or air bricks
3. **NEVER** block or cover outside flues
4. **NEVER** fit draught-stripping to doors of a room containing a gas appliance

BY LAW only a competent person - someone with the right knowledge and technical experience can carry out work on gas appliances. Do-it-yourself work on gas appliances could be dangerous and is illegal.

Should you carry out any modifications to your gas appliance without the permission of the Association, the Association will re-instate the appliance and you will be charged for the work.



Water Leaks

If there is a water leak at your property, turn off the water supply at the main stop-tap immediately and telephone the Association or use your pull cord or sayphone. While you are waiting for a contractor to attend:

Turn off any water or central-heating boiler and/or immersion heaters.

Turn on all taps to drain the water in the pipes as quickly as possible.

Electricity Failure

If there is an electricity failure at your property, or if you receive a shock from any electrical fitting, turn off the electricity supply at the meter immediately and telephone the Association or use your pull cords or sayphone to report the problem.

Frost Precautions

Serious damage can be caused to pipes, sinks, basins etc. by water in them freezing during spells of extremely cold weather.

At the onset of a cold spell take these precautions:

- Keep your home as warm as you can
- Do not leave your home entirely without heating for more than a day or two in very cold weather

If you are going away during cold weather it is always best to drain down the hot and cold water system completely.

- 1) Turn off the water at the stop tap
- 2) Open all taps until they run dry
- 3) Empty the WC flushing cistern

On your return

- 1) Close all taps
- 2) Turn the stop tap back on and allow the system to fill up

IMPORTANT

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOUR HEATING SYSTEM BE USED IF THE WATER SUPPLY IS TURNED OFF.

IT IS DANGEROUS TO LIGHT UP A HEATING SYSTEM UNLESS IT HAS BEEN REFILLED WITH WATER.



Fire Precautions

To avoid the risk of fire, there are a number of important things to remember:

- If you have children, ensure that your fire is guarded
- Do not prop open fire doors or tamper with self-closing devices. The closers have been fitted so that the fire proof doors limit any fire to a small area
- Do not hang clothes round fires
- Never wire more than one electric appliance into one socket
- Do not run cables under carpet or rugs
- Do not take electrical appliances into the bathroom
- Never leave pans, in particular chip-pans unattended
- Remove all plugs and close all doors before going to bed

Security

You should not allow anyone into your home unless you have checked their identity and are happy with their reason for calling.

All Association staff and contractors

working for the Association carry identification.

DO NOT BE AFRAID TO ASK TO SEE IT

If you live in a building with an entrance shared by others; do not let anyone in as you leave or enter the building - it may seem rude to shut the door on them; but this is an easy way for a thief to enter the building.

IF IN DOUBT - KEEP THEM OUT

If you go away on holiday avoid the usual tell-tale signs e.g. papers and letters in letterboxes.

Where possible arrange for a friend, relative or neighbour to draw curtains and collect post from time to time.

Security Lights

A well lit property will deter unwelcome visitors. Many people switch off lights to save money; but there are security lights that do not cost a great deal to run.

The Association has provided security lighting in line with Police recommendations in areas of risk.

Security lighting is a proven method of deterring intruders, it is to protect you and is extremely cheap to run.