

MAINTENANCE MAIL 2022/23



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Meet the Team

Who do I report a repair to?

Lynda Brown
Senior Maintenance Assistant



Ellie Tighe
Maintenance Assistant

Leanne Colman
Maintenance Assistant



Who may visit my home to see what work needs doing and then check that the work is satisfactory?

Nick Blowman
Maintenance Surveyor for
Doncaster, East Riding, Hereford,
Hull, Leeds, York (part), Yorkshire
(excluding Northallerton)



Steve Jones
Maintenance Surveyor for
Darlington (part), Durham,
Northumberland, Tyneside

Marc Bell
Maintenance Surveyor for
Darlington (part), Northallerton,
Tees Valley, York (part)



Who checks and services the gas central heating boiler in my home?

Andy Dye
Gas Engineer



Who organises all the contracts for planned maintenance works, garden maintenance, painting, and servicing of lifts and other communal facilities?

Charlotte Wallace
Contracts Coordinator



Who has day to day responsibility for the building of new homes?

Norman Clark
Project Manager



Above: Barton Street, Darlington

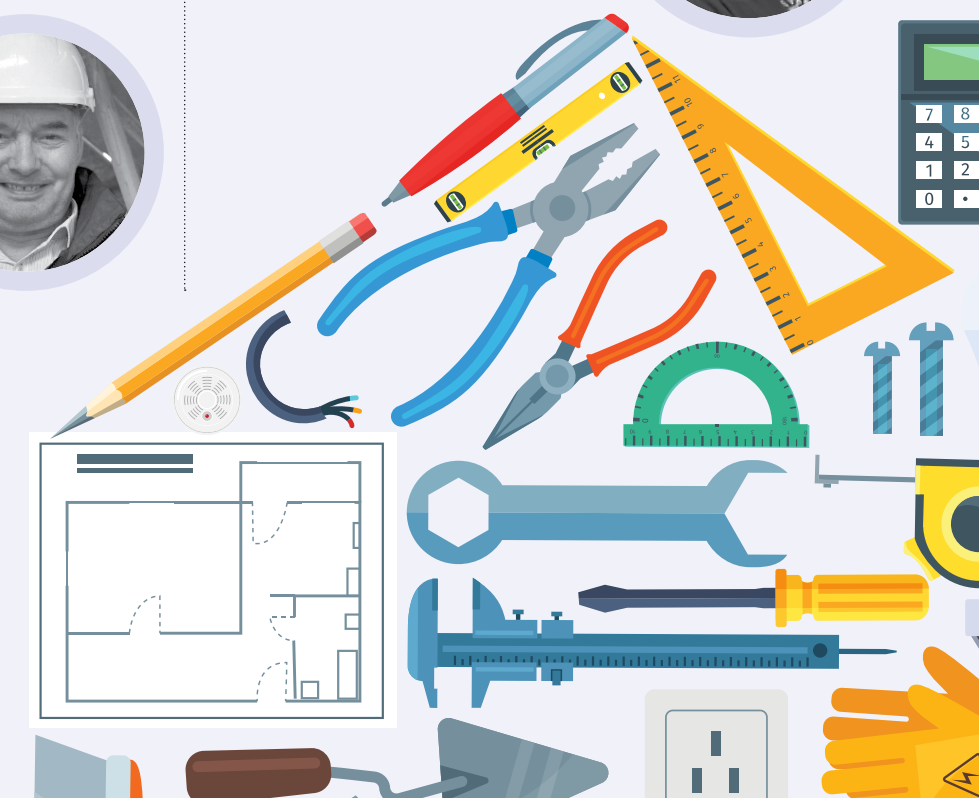
Who manages the maintenance team, is responsible for the repairs and maintenance service including major planned works, and deals with any complaints?

Shaun Brennan
Asset Manager



Who has overall responsibility for all repairs and maintenance services and the building of new homes; together with overall responsibility for all housing management services?

Andrea Abbott
Director of Customer Services



Code of Conduct

We asked residents how they expect us to behave towards them and as a result we agreed that we:

- will listen
- be courteous, respectful, friendly, helpful, honest, patient, and positive
- do what we say we will do to the best of our ability.

Residents also agreed a code of conduct for all customers to:

- Show respect and courtesy
- Provide as much information as possible to help us to respond appropriately
- Allow us and our contractors a reasonable length of time to respond
- Work with us to find solutions to any problems
- Keep appointments that have been made
- Answer letters and messages
- Be reasonable and honest
- Not smoke when staff or contractors are in your home
- Not use abusive, offensive or foul language, shout, be aggressive, make threats, be rude, patronising, or intimidating.

A full copy of the customer code of conduct is available on our website or on request.



Planned Home Improvements

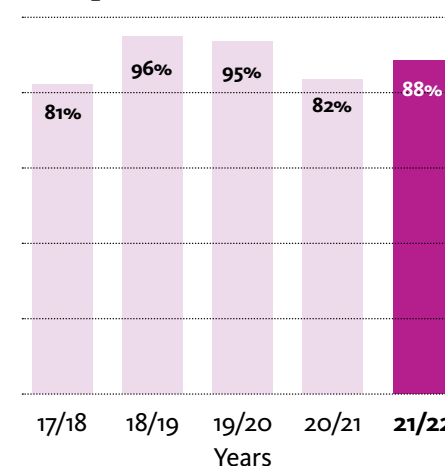


From April 2020 to March 2022, over £1.8 million was spent improving 557 homes

New kitchens in 159 homes	£819,000
New heating in 171 homes	£473,000
New windows in 115 homes	£267,000
External wall insulation to 26 homes	£166,000
New external doors to 47 homes	£100,000
New fencing at 16 homes	£31,000
Removal and replanting of trees at 20 homes	£23,000
New bathroom/wet room in 2 homes	£16,000
New electric heating in 1 home	£3,500

Resident satisfaction with planned home improvements

88% of residents were satisfied with planned works



Top: Davidson Cottages, Newcastle upon Tyne with external insulation

Bottom: New gates at Derwentway, Gateshead



Improvements to the planned maintenance service

Residents who are members of the Residents' Scrutiny Panel looked in detail at the planned maintenance service and the following changes will be made to improve it for all residents -

- We will always inform residents of any planned or cyclical maintenance due to be carried out in their home, including the name of the contractor, before the contractor gets in touch with residents
- The information given to residents before work starts will include -
 - simple step by step list of everything that will be done
 - a contact telephone number for the contractor
 - whether access to the home will be affected
 - whether the contractor will make good any damage to decoration
 - how long the work will take
 - how much dust and noise there will be
 - details of any choices of kitchen units, floor covering, worktops etc
 - the proposed layout
 - lighting
 - number and position of sockets
 - whether a disturbance allowance will be paid and if so, whether it will be paid at the end of the work in an individual home or at the end of the contract.
- A plain English instruction guide will be provided when a new central heating boiler is installed
- We will make sure that contractors spend enough time explaining the controls of any new appliances; and correct any poor-quality works
- We will continue to pay disturbance allowances, in addition to making good any damage to decoration, in recognition of the inconvenience caused to residents during improvement works
- If there is enough room, a heated towel rail will be fitted, during the planned replacement of bathrooms.

Residents said...

"The team of two workmen we had were excellent. They took pride in their work and it shows in their craftsmanship"

The Woodlands, Doncaster

"Job well done, fitters very polite, leaving the place very tidy"

The Woodlands, Doncaster

"Very happy, it is a lovely kitchen"

Bob Harrison Court, Darlington

"Workmen on site are very helpful and left a nice clean job everyday"

Meadowfield Road, Darlington

"Would have preferred more drawers and choice of tiles"

Connaught Court, Middlesbrough

"Thank you for giving me a perfect kitchen"

Lanehouse Road, Thornaby

Carole Ramsden had a new heating system installed in her home in Darlington.

She said: "My old boiler wasn't very efficient so I was pleased when the new electric boiler was fitted, along with new radiators. The house is now so much warmer and I have full control over the radiators so I can turn them up or down as I please. Even with electricity prices rising, I am still in credit, so I am happy with that."

Ann Miller had a new kitchen fitted in her home in Thornaby.

She said: "I am very pleased with the kitchen. Before any work began I was given a choice of units, worktops, handles, tiles and flooring, and there was a good choice. The workmen were very good and always cleaned up after themselves and it has really helped to brighten my home up so I couldn't be happier."



Above: Ann Miller

Future Home Improvements

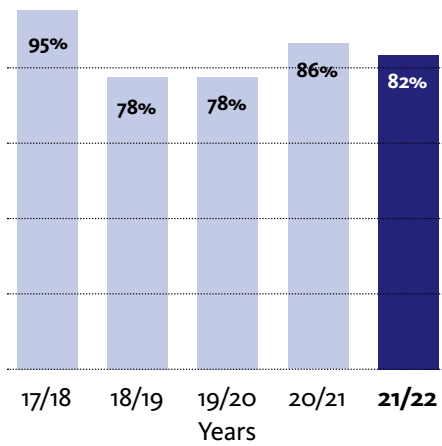
Details of the improvement works planned for the next five years are usually published in this newsletter but these are still under review due to increasing costs, and we are also waiting to hear the outcome of our bid for grant funding towards the cost of fitting external insulation to solid wall homes. The programme of future improvement works will be published separately as soon as it has been finalised.



Repairs Service

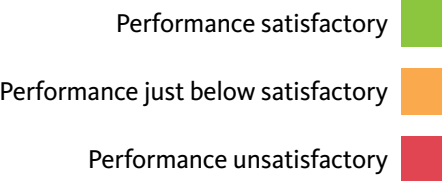
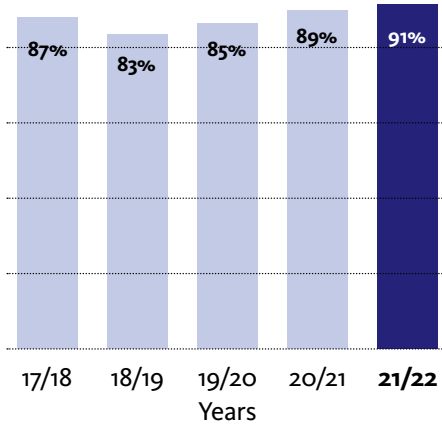
Completion of repairs within target

82% of repairs were completed within the target timescale

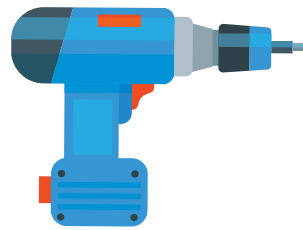


First time fix

91% of repairs were completed during the first visit



How did we do?
Over £2.1m spent on repairing homes in 2021/22



Residents said..

“Thank you for the quick response to my broken boiler, I really appreciate it”
Mrs B. Wenlock Road, South Shields

“Thank you for getting the shower repaired so quickly”
Ms M, Paterson House, Hull

“The contractor did a great job”
Mrs P, Yellowly Court, Darlington

Contractors and overall ratings

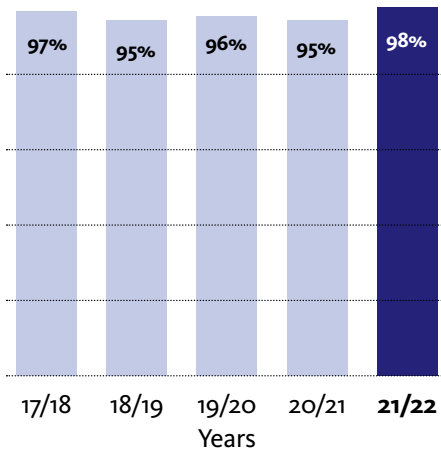
Contractor name	Number of repairs	Number of repairs completed on time	Resident satisfaction %	1st time fix %	Average number of days to complete a repair
RFM Group	454	308	90%	84%	10
GT Joinery	755	479	98%	91%	19
Derek Shaw Joinery	1859	1503	95%	83%	5
Kingstown Works Ltd	731	366	93%	86%	6
A Scott Builder	477	336	96%	76%	6
FSH Group	187	135	88%	76%	13
John Kistorz & Son	37	31	91%	91%	13
GB Electrical and Building Services	22	17	75%	100%	10
DFP Services	87	75	100%	100%	5

Those contractors that are highlighted in red have not met the performance targets that we set for them. The targets are set so that a high-quality repairs service is provided to residents. We will speak with these contractors about how they can improve on their performance.

The performance of our main repairs contractors is measured by residents' satisfaction with their work, the number of jobs completed on time, the number of repairs completed at the first visit, and the average time taken to complete repairs. This gives an overall performance rating, which is displayed in the above table.

Customer satisfaction with the repairs service

98% of residents satisfied with the repairs service



How to report a repair

CALL Freephone 0800 0287428 and press

1: to report a new repair

2: for a query on an outstanding repair

3: for queries on appointments for gas servicing, electrical inspections, fire safety works or water hygiene

You will be able to speak to a member of our maintenance team who will try to identify the repair work needed from your description without a Maintenance Surveyor needing to visit your home, meaning a quicker repair.

ONLINE: www.railwayha.co.uk/doit-online/report-a-repair

Please fill in and return the customer satisfaction form you receive when you report a repair. We use the surveys to check and improve our repairs service.

We read and record every survey you return, and if you are not happy with the service you receive then we will always try our best to put this right.

140 residents told us they were unhappy with a repair to their home. This was 2.9% of the 4,916 repairs carried out in 2021/22. The most common reasons for dissatisfaction with repairs were –

Most common reasons for dissatisfaction with a repair

	Number of residents	Percentage of all negative comments
Time taken to start or finish the repair	28	20%
The repair work was not finished	22	15.7%
The problem was not fixed	19	13.6%
No appointment was made by the contractor	15	10.7%
Worker did not wear mask, gloves or socially distance	8	5.7%
Unhappy with the quality of the work	6	4.3%
No shoe covers worn by worker	3	2.1%
Appointment not kept by contractor	2	1.4%
Total	103	73.6%

You can include a photograph of the repair you are reporting and this could mean that our Maintenance Surveyor doesn't need to visit your home to look at the problem before it is repaired. This will speed up the repair and cause less inconvenience to you.

ONLINE VIA MY RHA, an online portal just for residents that means you can access our services 24/7. It is designed for mobile use, giving you easier ways to contact us at a time that suits you.

Using the repairs handbook when reporting a repair may help you to explain to us what is wrong and help us to carry out the repair in one visit. The handbook shows pictures of most parts of your home from taps to doors to heating systems, and easy to follow guides.

Please contact us if you would like a copy of the repairs handbook – call Freephone: 0800 0287428 or email: info@railwayha.co.uk

Are your contact details up to date?

Please let us know if you change your telephone number.

Prefer emails to letters? Prefer to receive publications electronically rather than in print? Let us know your preferences by emailing: info@railwayha.co.uk

Keeping Homes Safe

Electrical Testing

We carry out an Electrical Installation Condition inspection in all our residents' homes every 5 years. We will let you know when your home is due an inspection. The inspection takes 1-2 hours and involves working at your main circuit board or consumer unit. Access will also be needed to test a few sockets and switches to make sure the wiring is in good condition. It is important that you allow access for the electrician to carry out the inspection to make sure your electrics are safe and to protect everyone in your home.

At 31 March 2022, the electrics in 93% of homes (1,416 homes), and 100% of 42 communal areas in apartment blocks had been checked.

What to do if my Power Goes Off

- Check the control panel to see if a fuse has tripped
- Turn all appliances off
- Flick any tripped fuses back on
- Slowly turn each appliance back on again one at a time to see if one of the appliances trips the electric off again.
- Check to see if neighbours have power as it could be a power cut.
- If none of your appliances have caused the problem and there isn't a general power cut on your area, please call us on 0800 0287428 or if it is outside of office hours, use your pull cord if you have one or call our out of hours service on 0300 3034917.

Gas Servicing

The annual gas safety check will help to keep you, anyone in your home, and your neighbours, safe from carbon monoxide poisoning and/or gas explosions.

It will take no more than 30 minutes, and we will do it on a day and time to suit you.

It is part of your tenancy agreement that you must let us in to carry out essential repairs and maintenance, including the gas safety check. If you don't let our gas engineer in to your home to check the gas appliances then as a very last resort we will take legal action and you will have to pay our legal costs.

Don't take the risk. Every year in the UK, people die and are seriously injured by poorly maintained gas appliances.

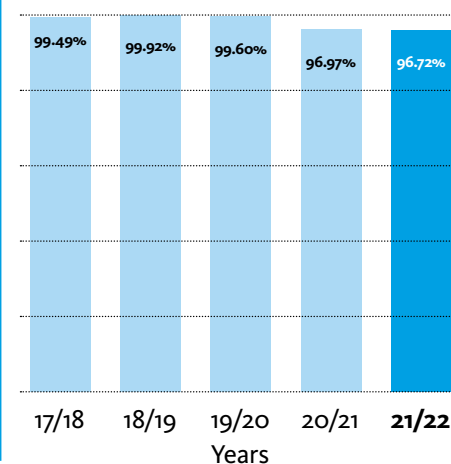
	Number of homes	Percentage of all services due in 2021/22
Gas safety check/servicing completed	999	99.20%
Gas safety check/servicing completed within 28 days of the end of 2021/22	7*	0.7%
Gas safety check/servicing not completed	1**	0.1%
Total number of homes with gas central heating boiler	1007	100%

*1 home was empty and the gas was capped off until the new resident moved in; 3 were carried out late due to covid; 3 residents missed or cancelled appointments

**The resident missed 3 appointments and legal action was taken to gain access to carry out the safety checks/servicing

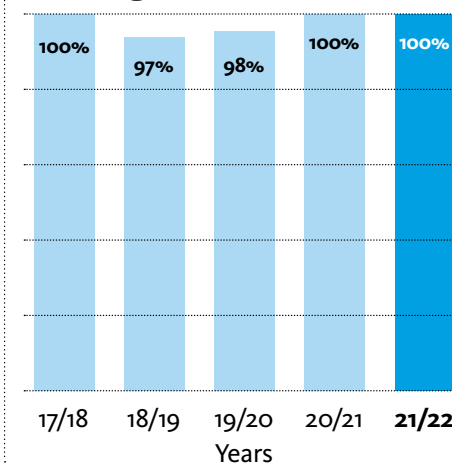
Gas servicing completed within the anniversary date

96.72% of services were completed within the target timescale



Residents' satisfaction with gas servicing

100% of residents' were satisfied with their gas servicing



Andy Dye, Gas Engineer

Residents say...

"I think he should have worn covers over his boots"

"The engineer was very polite and respectful, also very helpful"

"Engineer was courteous, polite, helpful and respected my home"

"Always polite and takes the time to answer any questions I have"

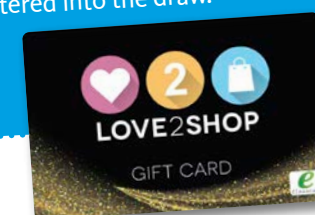
"A really nice man, explained why my heating and hot water wasn't working the day before and told me how to fix it if it happens again"

"The engineer was most polite and helpful. I had some questions about my hot water he explained what it might be and made a note for a plumber to call"

All 9 communal gas boilers that provide heating to 242 homes were checked and serviced in 2021/22

Would you like to win a £30 shopping voucher?

From 1st October 2022 we will run a quarterly (every 3 months) draw for the chance to win a £30 Love to Shop voucher - if you allow access on the first visit by the gas engineer, your name will automatically be entered into the draw.



Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Can't be seen
- Can't be smelt
- Can't be heard
- Can be stopped

Carbon monoxide detectors are fitted in all homes with gas or oil appliances. The detectors are a sealed unit, the batteries should last for 10 years and then we will replace it. If you have a carbon monoxide detector fitted in your home, please test it weekly - it could save your life. If you have gas or oil-fired appliances and don't have a carbon monoxide detector in your home, please contact us so that we can arrange to fit one.



Top Tip

When you test the alarm, using a long pole like a broom handle will allow you to do this safely from the ground. Do not stand on a chair or stool and only use a stepladder if you are confident and able to do so.

Gas leaks

If you suspect a gas leak you need to act quickly -

- Contact the national emergency gas telephone service 0800 111 999
- Open all doors and windows to ventilate the area
- If it is safe to do so, turn off the gas supply at the emergency control valve on the meter
- Do not turn the gas supply back on again until it has been checked by a Gas Safe registered engineer
- Do not use any electrical switches
- Extinguish any naked flames
- Do not smoke
- If you are feeling unwell visit your GP or local hospital immediately and tell them that you may have been exposed to carbon monoxide
- If the gas engineer finds a problem with any gas appliances, follow their advice about using the appliances.

If you have a carbon monoxide detector fitted in your home, please test it weekly - it could save your life

What to do if my heating isn't working?

Central heating boiler not working?

If you are able, please check the following before reporting it to us -

- If you have a prepayment meter, do you have credit on the meter?
- Is the boiler making any noise?
- Is the gauge reading between 1 and 2?
- Is the electricity turned on?
- Is the gas turned on?
- Is water turned on?
- Is the room thermostat set to continuous?
- Is the red light on?

Central heating boiler is heating the water but not the radiators?

If you are able, please check the following before reporting it to us -

- Are the radiator valves fully turned up?
- If there is a room thermostat, is it set to continuous?

Central heating boiler is heating the radiators but not the water?

If you are able, please check the following before reporting it to us -

- Is there a good flow of water out of the tap?
- Is the water hot when the heating is switched on?

Water Hygiene - Legionella – Reduce Your Risk

Legionnaires’ disease is a potentially fatal type of pneumonia caused by bacteria in water but it is harmless if the water is below 20°C or above 60°C.

There are some simple steps you can take to protect your household -

- 1. If you do not use your shower regularly, turn your shower on and run it for a few minutes at least once a week, to flush out stale water. Keep out of the way whilst you are doing this. Do the same if you have been away from home for a while e.g., on holiday or in hospital.
- 2. Dismantle, scrub and de-scale the showerhead and shower hose at least once every 3 months or earlier if scaling is evident (be careful not to lose the washers inside). This is easily done by removing the shower hose and head and leaving it soaking for half an hour in white vinegar then scrubbing off any deposits. Then rinse it in warm water to wash off the vinegar.

- If you live in one of our sheltered schemes we will clean your shower head for you, every 3 months. This is a legal requirement. Please help us to keep you safe by allowing us access to carry out this work.
- 3. Run water through all the hot and cold water taps throughout your home at least once a week, and before using if you have been away from home for a while e.g., on holiday or in hospital.
 - 4. Temperatures above 60°C will kill Legionella bacteria so make sure that the temperature of the hot water in your boiler/cylinder is set at a minimum of 60°C. Beware of burns and scalding and take extra care if you have children.

Top Tip

Know where your main stop tap is and make sure it works so that in case of a leak you can isolate the supply to prevent waste of water and damage to your property.

Water saving tips –

- Fill the kettle with only enough water for your needs
- Use your washing machine and dishwasher only when you have a full load
- Cooling water in the fridge means you don’t have to run the tap for a period to get cold water
- Turn off the tap whilst you brush your teeth
- If you have a dual flush control on your toilet, don’t forget to use it
- Use a water butt in your garden to collect water that can be used on plants.

In 2021/22 we –

Carried out water hygiene risk assessments in 15 apartments blocks that have a communal water system

Cleaned showerheads 4 times/year in 297 of the 354 homes that have a communal water system – please help us to keep you safe by allowing us to carry out this work.

If you live in an apartment block

- Keep all communal areas and exits of apartments clear. Do not leave any items in these escape routes.
- Fire doors and self-closing devices should not be tampered with.
- Faults or damage to fire doors should be reported immediately.

If a fire does start, call 999. Never assume that someone else has reported it.

Smoke alarms

If you live in a newly built home or one of our sheltered schemes you will have a hard-wired smoke detector in your home. We test these annually and replace whenever necessary.

In 2021/22 we checked the fire detection systems in 883 homes.

We fit battery operated smoke alarms in all other homes. These are sealed units, and the batteries should last for 10 years. You should test the smoke alarms in your home monthly.

How do I test my smoke alarm?

- Press the test button for 10 seconds.
- The alarm will sound loudly so you know it is working.
- We will replace battery operated smoke alarms if they do not work.

Top Tip

When you test the alarm, using a long pole like a broom handle will allow you to do this safely from the ground. Do not stand on a chair or stool and only use a stepladder if you are confident and able to do so.

Fire Safety

If you smoke

- Use an appropriate ashtray, empty it regularly but do not empty hot ash into a bin
- Keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children.

Using a laptop?

- Make sure it’s on a hard surface to prevent overheating.
- Always turn computers and laptops off at night.
- Don’t overload electrical sockets.

Make an escape plan so that you and your family are prepared if there is a fire in your home - the best route is the way you would normally leave your home but think of another way out just in case this is blocked by the fire.

Make sure that you have **working smoke alarms** by testing them once per week.

At night when you go to bed

- Switch off white goods such as washing machine, tumble dryer and dishwasher
- Switch off all electrical appliances that do not need to be left on
- Don’t leave phones, tablets or any other devices charging overnight
- Keep mobility aids and any methods of calling for help accessible
- Extinguish cigarettes and candles
- Keep main door keys accessible and in a safe place
- Close all the internal doors (to prevent a fire spreading)

At Christmas

- Unplug fairy lights and other electrical Christmas decorations when you leave the house or go to bed
- Check fairy lights are in good working order, cables and wires are not exposed, and replace any bulbs that have blown
- Don’t let bulbs touch materials that can scorch or burn easily such as fabric or paper.
- Make sure the fuse in the plug is the correct rating
- If you need to plug more than one appliance into an electrical socket, use a multi socket adapter which is fitted with a fuse and has surge protection.

What is a fire risk assessment?

A trained specialist checks the communal areas in our apartment blocks to look for anything that could cause a fire to start, anything that could burn once a fire has started, and the people who could be at risk if there was a fire.

S/he will then tell us of any action we need to take to minimise the risks to an appropriate level.

We are legally required to carry out annual fire risk assessments of schemes that have communal facilities, and biennial fire risk assessments of schemes that only have communal staircases.

If you live in an apartment block that has communal areas such as staircases, corridors, lounge and kitchen and would like to see the fire risk assessment, please contact us by calling Freephone 0800 0287428 or email info@railwayha.co.uk

In 2021/22 100% of fire risk assessments and actions were completed.

Other safety checks

We also:

	% completed in 2021/22
Service 14 lifts that benefit up to 360 homes	100%
Check asbestos in the communal areas of 14 apartment blocks of 308 homes*	100%
Check hardwired carbon monoxide alarms in 96 homes	100%
Check emergency lighting in 30 schemes of 598 homes	100%
Check firefighting equipment in 17 apartment blocks of 421 homes	100%
Check oil central heating boilers in two homes	100%
Check portable electrical appliances in communal areas of 16 schemes of 398 homes	100%

*Asbestos is safe if it is in good condition and not disturbed. If it deteriorates it will be treated to make it safe, or removed

If you have any concerns about the fire safety of your home, please contact us on freephone 0800 0287428

Permission for Alterations/Improvements

You have the legal right to make certain improvements to your home but you must ask our permission before starting any work.

Some of the most common improvements are garden sheds, greenhouses, decking, patios, kitchens and bathrooms.

We will only refuse permission if the alteration will affect the safety of your home, cause additional expense to the Association or reduce the value of the property.

We may give permission for decorative improvements such as garden decking or fire surrounds but ask that you remove it when you move.

If you have already altered or improved your home, please let us know so that we can offer you appropriate advice.



You must ask our permission before starting any work.

Right to Compensation for Home Improvements

When your tenancy ends, you may be entitled to compensation for certain improvements that you have made to your home, such as installing new bathrooms, kitchens or double glazing.

We use a legally agreed formula to calculate compensation. It is based on the original cost, less any financial help that you may have received such as a grant and decreases each year as the improvement ages. It will be less than you paid for the work originally. After the estimated life of the item has passed, no compensation is payable.

The maximum compensation we will pay is £3,000. If the value of your improvement is less than £50 when your tenancy ends then no compensation is payable

The legal right to claim compensation for improvements only applies to tenants. It does not apply to next of kin or any other beneficiary to a tenant's will.

Further information is available on our website or on request – (railwayha.co.uk)

Home Contents Insurance

Be prepared for the unexpected – insure the contents of your home.

Your household contents are your responsibility. Insuring your home will give you peace of mind if the worst happens.

The Association is responsible for the structure of your home but not for your personal contents or any damage done to your furniture, belongings or decorations whether it is because of theft, vandalism or burst pipes. It is your responsibility to insure the contents of your home including carpets and decoration so that if anything is damaged, you can then claim on your contents insurance.

Home Contents Insurance can be arranged through the National Housing Federation 'My Home' contents insurance scheme in an easy affordable way.

Your household contents are your responsibility.



AGE Co also offers contents insurance designed for over 50s. It offers annual or monthly payments and new for old cover.

Call: **0800 0556361**

Or visit: **www.ageco.co.uk** for a free quote. Age Co is owned by Age UK and gives its profits to the charity to support older people most in need.

Call for a free quote

10 reasons to choose My Home Contents Insurance Scheme this winter

- Flexible regular Pay-As-You-Go payment options (fortnightly and monthly premiums include a transaction charge).
- Apply over the phone or by completing an application form.
- You don't need to have special door or window locks (just a lockable front door).
- Covers theft, water damage, fire.
- Covers tenants improvements (up to £2,000 or 20% of the sum insured whichever is greater).
- Accidental damage to TV's and aerials and home computers is covered as standard (excludes items designed to be portable including mobile phones, ipods etc). A £50 excess may apply, full details are available on request.
- Covers damage to external glazing for which you are responsible.
- Covers replacement and installation of locks for outside doors or windows and alarms, if keys are lost or stolen.
- The sum insured will be increased by £1,500 or 15% (whichever is the greater) for one month before and after Christmas to cover presents bought or received (excludes theft which does not involve forcible or violent entry into your home).
- Covers theft or attempted theft of contents in sheds, outbuildings and garages (up to £3,000).
- Optional extras are available for an additional premium.

Exclusions & limits apply. A copy of the policy wording is available on request.

Ask your landlord for an application pack or to apply for cover today, call My Home on:

0345 450 7288

email: myhome@thistleinsurance.co.uk or visit www.thistlemyhome.co.uk

The National Housing Federation working in partnership with Thistle Insurance Services Ltd. Thistle Insurance Services Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN 310419. Registered in England under No. 00338645. Registered office: Rossington's Business Park, West Carr Road, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7SW. Thistle Insurance Services Ltd is part of the PIB Group. Our Data Protection Privacy Policy is online at https://www.thistleinsurance.co.uk/Privacy-Policy

THISTLE
TENANT RISKS

General Advice

Damp & Mould

Do you have damp and mould in your home? Report it by calling our freephone 0800 0287428, using the 'Report a Repair' form on our website or the residents' portal on our website, or emailing info@railwayha.co.uk

We will investigate it, find the cause and do any repairs that are needed.

If the cause is obvious, such as a leaking pipe, we will arrange for it to be repaired.

If the cause is not obvious then we will visit your home to see the problem and decide what needs doing to sort it out. We may need to arrange for an independent specialist to carry out a survey. Then we will tell you what the specialist has found, their recommendations to deal with the problem, and what we plan to do.

In some cases, it can take time to find out what is causing the problem and to fix it but we will try our best to keep you informed of progress.

What is the difference between condensation and damp?

Both can cause mould, damage to clothes, furnishings and decoration and leave a musty smell. However, damp tends to leave a 'tide mark' on the wall and will usually need building or repair works to deal with it.

To reduce condensation, homes need to be kept warm and adequately ventilated. We have provided loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, double glazing, and more energy efficient gas or electric heating to help keep homes warm; as well as extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms. For those homes with solid walls, we are gradually providing external wall insulation.

This work is very expensive and we have recently made an application to the government for grant funding towards the cost of providing external wall insulation to the remaining 246 solid wall homes.

If you are struggling to afford to heat your home, or if there are any problems with your home that may be causing condensation, please contact us as soon as possible.

Two active people can produce more than 13 litres of moisture per day, through breathing and daily activities such as boiling the kettle, showering and drying clothes. Condensation is caused when moisture in the air meets a cold surface. It is usually seen on window panes, wall tiles, mirrors, porcelain toilet bowls and cisterns. If left, it may cause mould growth. It can happen at any time of the year but it is greater in the colder months.

Top tips for reducing condensation from day to day living -

- Cover pans when you are cooking
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors when cooking or bathing
- Run the cold water into a bath first, this can reduce steam by 90%
- Dry your clothes outside if possible, or in a well-ventilated room.
- Don't hang wet clothes on radiators.
- Vent your tumble drier to the outside if it is not self-condensing
- Wipe any water that accumulates on window sills and other surfaces.
- Open a couple of windows to get a through draught for about an hour a day
- Open windows in the kitchen and bathrooms when you are using them or use extractor fans if you have them

- Keep air vents unblocked
- Keep window trickle vents open
- Don't overpack your wardrobe
- Leave space between furniture and walls, so that air can flow freely through these spaces

If you want to remove any mould -

- Wear protective gloves and a face mask, along with old clothes you don't mind throwing away
- Open windows in the room you're cleaning and shut the door
- Use a domestic cleaning product (not bleach or washing up liquid), vinegar, baking soda or a mould remover - you can buy these from supermarkets and DIY stores. Carefully follow the product guidance and safety instructions
- After clearing the mould, clean all surfaces by wiping down with a wet cloth to remove any spores that may have spread, then dry the surfaces.

If you would like any further advice, please contact us to make an appointment for one of our Maintenance Surveyors to visit you.



Close circuit television (CCTV) and video doorbells

Are you thinking of, or have already installed CCTV or a video doorbell?

Have you thought about data protection and privacy?

Can you position the cameras to avoid intruding on your neighbours' property or any shared or public spaces?

If you set up your CCTV/video doorbell so it only captures images within the boundary of your property, then data protection law does not apply.

If your CCTV or video doorbell captures images of people outside the boundary of your property, such as your neighbours' homes or gardens, shared spaces or a public footpath or street, then you must have clear and justifiable reasons, and comply with data protection law to protect the privacy of others by -

- Putting up signs to let people know you are using CCTV/video doorbell
- Disabling the audio
- Not capturing more footage than you need to protect your property
- Keep the footage securely and make sure nobody else can watch it without good reason
- Only keeping the footage for as long as you need it
- Making sure that other members of your household do not misuse the CCTV or video doorbell
- Respecting the data protection rights of the people whose images you capture
- You must make sure that the information from your CCTV/doorbell is not used for any other purpose than protecting your property.

Please contact us if you would like any further advice on installing and using CCTV or video doorbells.

Blocked guttering?

Please let us know and we will arrange for the guttering to be cleared. The best time to do this work is once most of the leaves have fallen from any trees that are near your home.

Dealing with pests in the home

If your local council does not provide a free pest control service then the Association will arrange and pay for the removal of any pest in a habitable room of your home that may be a health and safety risk, for example, rats/mice, bedbugs, cockroaches, fleas, flies, and wasps. We will also remove these pests if the access to your home is affected.

Dealing with an infestation of any type of pest in your home can be an unpleasant thing but, it is your responsibility to deal with moths, slugs, ants and beetles. Suitable treatment products are available from DIY, Hardware and Pound shops.

To deter pests from your home -

- Keep your home, all kitchen cupboards and work surfaces clean and free from clutter
- Keep all food stuffs stored in sealed containers
- Dispose of food waste and domestic rubbish carefully
- Do not leave rubbish to accumulate in your garden.



Blocked drains

Disposing of food, fat, oil and grease down sink drains can block the waste pipes, drains and sewers.

Over time it will stop your waste water running away, but, as it needs to go somewhere, this could come up through sinks, toilets, baths or drains and might cause your home/garden to flood.

Please dispose of all food, fat, oil and grease waste properly with household rubbish.

Another common cause of blocked drains is wet wipes. Baby wipes, cosmetic wipes, bathroom cleaning wipes and moist toilet tissues are not flushable or recyclable, even though some labels say they are. They should always be placed in your rubbish bin.

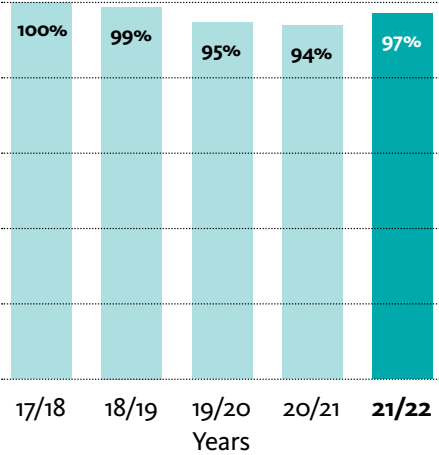
It costs on average £186 per call out to clear blockages in drains. Residents will be charged for the costs to clear any drains that are blocked by nappies, sanitary/incontinence pads, fat or wipes.



Garden Maintenance

Maintenance of open plan gardens

97% of residents were satisfied with the garden maintenance service.



Top Right: North Eastern Court, Gateshead
Right: Park Parade, Leeds

Please help our grass cutters by –

- Keeping plant pots and ornaments to paved areas only
- Not planting any trees in open plan gardens
- Removing paddling pools, swings and slides after use

In the last two years, £23,112 has been spent on pruning, removing and replacing trees.



Residents said...

- “Very good service”
- “Very good job, quick tidy and efficient”
- “They always do a good job and clear up after themselves”
- “Too many weeds in grass, stalks of dandelions still prominent after cutting”
- “Everything is always left neat and tidy”

Saving energy & money

Fact or Fiction?

It's cheaper to run appliances at night rather than during the day	Mostly fiction	It is only cheaper to use electricity overnight if your electricity is on an Economy 7 or Economy 10 tariff
Most of the electricity used to power home electronics is used while they are not in use	Fact	Leaving TV, games consoles and mobile phones, computers and laptops on charge/stand by uses up to 75% of all electricity used to power electronics
Keeping doors inside your home open when you have the heat on saves energy	Fiction	Closing the doors keeps the warmed air in a contained space, which is more efficient than dispersing it throughout the house
Cooking with a microwave saves energy	Fact	Microwaves are quicker and use less energy than an oven or hob
It's cheaper to leave the lights on all the time, rather than turning them on and off	Mostly fiction	Modern energy saving light bulbs and fluorescent lights do require some extra energy when first turned on, but unless you're only leaving the room for a moment, it still saves energy to turn them off
I can save energy by washing my clothes at a lower temperature	Fact	Washing your clothes at 30°C uses about 40% less energy than washing at higher temperatures
LED bulbs are hazardous.	Fiction	LED bulbs are recyclable and are free of lead, mercury and other toxic materials
Solar panels are pointless in the UK	Fiction	Solar panels generate energy even when the weather is cloudy

Running Costs



Kettle
2 minutes
3p



Ironing
30 minutes
28p

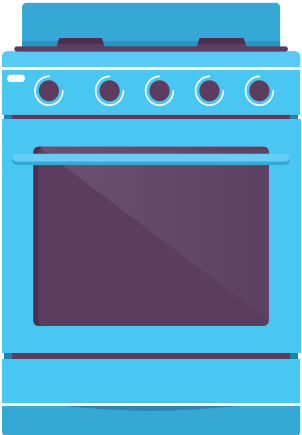


Toaster
4 minutes
4p

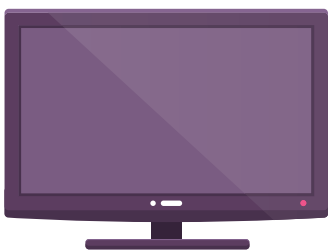
Showering
5 minutes
27p

Bath (150 litres)
Half full
£1.09

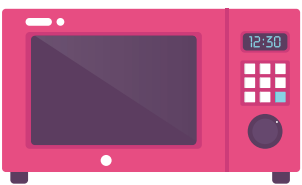
Electric Hob
30 minutes
31p



Electric Oven
1 hour
68p



Television
Viewing - 1 hour
6p



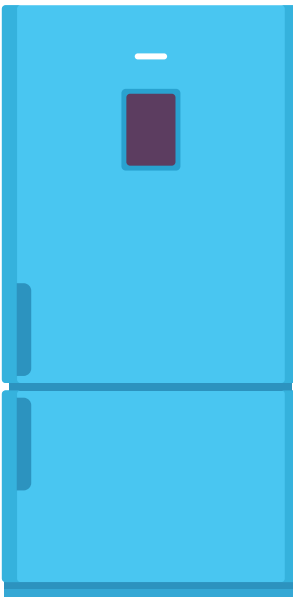
Microwave
5 minutes
4p

Stand by - 24 hours
6p

Washing Machine
1 hour
93p



Fridge Freezer
1 Month
£7.58

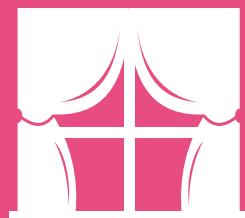


Tips to avoid wasting energy

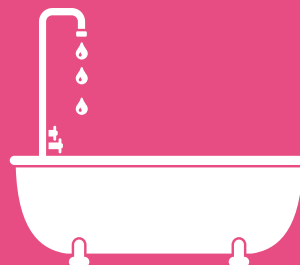
Doing these could help reduce your energy costs



Use a timer on your central heating system. Set the heating and hot water to come on only when required.



Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows. Check for draughts too. Seal gaps around doors with draft excluders.



Turn taps off properly - in a single week a dripping hot tap can waste enough hot water to fill half a bath!



Always turn off the light when you leave a room.



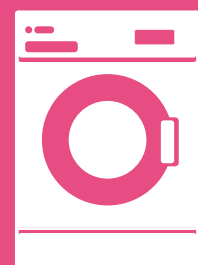
Use energy saving light bulbs



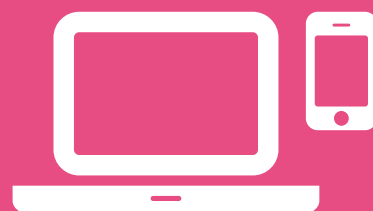
If you have a hot water tank set the cylinder thermostat to 60°C (150°F)



If using a kettle only boil the water you need.



When washing up and washing or drying by machine, try to fully load the appliance. One full load uses less energy than two half loads.



Don't leave appliances on standby or laptops and mobile phones on charge unnecessarily.



Dry your clothes outside during nice weather.

Value for money savings

Savings of over
£124,000
were made in 2021-22
without affecting
the quality of homes or services

Reletting homes
more quickly
SAVED
£15,924

Grouping together
non urgent repairs
and carrying these
out as one contract
SAVED
£4,534

Savings made
from contracts and
suggestions made in
previous years
SAVED
£29,730
in 2021/22

Tendering of the
contract for window
replacements
SAVED
£74,538

Top Tips for Winter

Stopcock

Know the location of the stopcock so that you can turn the water supply off in the event of an emergency such as burst pipes.

Water Leaks

Report any water leaks promptly so that small problems do not escalate.

Going Away

If you are going away, leave the heating or set the timer so that it continues to come on regularly. This will reduce the likelihood of condensation and burst pipes.

Money Advice

If you are struggling to make ends meet, please contact us on 0800 0287 428 as soon as possible. We can help to make sure you are getting all the money you are entitled to and put you in touch with other services that can help you to keep on top of your rent and other household bills –

Citizens Advice

Visit: citizensadvice.org.uk
Tel: 0800 1448848

National Debtline

Visit: nationaldebtline.org
Tel: 0800 808 4000

Turn 2 Us

Visit: turn2us.org.uk
Tel: 0808 802 2000

Step Change

Visit: stepchange.org
Tel: 0800 138 1111

Money Advice Service

Visit: moneyadviceservice.org.uk
Tel: 0800 138 7777

Age UK

Visit: ageuk.org.uk
Tel: 0800 678 1602

Money Helper

Visit: moneyhelper.org.uk
Tel: 0800 138 7777

Christians Against Poverty

Visit: capuk.org

The Trussell Trust

Visit: trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank
Tel: 01722 580180

Your local council may also have a hardship fund, benefits and debt advice service, and information about local food banks

Is there anything else you would like to know about the maintenance of your home?

We have tried to provide information about all of our main repairs and maintenance services but if there is anything else you would like us to include, please let us know.

Please tell us by calling free phone 0800 0287428; writing to us at the address shown below or emailing us at info@railwayha.co.uk

Our office in Darlington, Maple House, 11 Tillage Green, Westpark Village, DL2 2GL is open between 8.30 am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

Freephone: 0800 0287428

Report repairs online: www.railwayha.co.uk/do-it-online/report-a-repair

Email: info@railwayha.co.uk

Out of office hours, residents can report emergency repairs by using their emergency pull cord or alarm if they have one; or by telephoning 0300 3034917

www.railway.co.uk

