

# Home Maintenance Manual



# Contents

<a href="#"><u>Introduction</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>Condensation, Damp, and Mould</u></a>	4
<a href="#"><u>Bleeding a Radiator</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>Unblocking Sinks and Shower Traps</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Changing a Lightbulb</u></a>	10
<a href="#"><u>Cleaning Gutters</u></a>	11
<a href="#"><u>Oiling Hinges, Handles, and Catches</u></a>	12
<a href="#"><u>Turning Off the Water Supply</u></a>	13
<a href="#"><u>Circuit Breakers</u></a>	14
<a href="#"><u>Overloading Extension Plugs</u></a>	15

# Introduction

This handbook provides information on basic household maintenance and frequent tasks around the home that tenants have requested information on.

If you feel there is missing information that you would like to see here, please get in touch.



Together  
we do.

# Condensation, Damp, and Mould

Damp and mould in homes can be caused by leaking pipes, rising damp on ground floors, or water seeping in because of damage to a roof, external render/brickwork or window frame finishes.



*There is a key difference between damp and mould.*

- **Damp** is the term used where there is a defect to a home caused by water penetration or rising damp.
- **Mould** is usually a consequence of too much moisture in the air (condensation) due to lack of adequate heating, poor insulation, or when air isn't able to circulate around all parts of the home.

**Condensation** is usually caused by excess moisture indoors and forms when the air containing moisture cannot hold anymore water and reverts back to its liquid state.

The warmer the home, the more moisture that can be held in the air. Where a home is cold, the air cannot hold onto the moisture and water droplets form on the colder surfaces within the home.



Cooking, showering, and drying clothes indoors without adequate ventilation can all cause excess moisture. Droplets can form on indoor surfaces such as mirrors, windowsills, furniture, in cupboards and on walls, particularly when they're cold.

If this water is not wiped away, eventually mould spores will begin to grow on these surfaces.

**You can help prevent the build-up of condensation and mould by:**

- Putting lids on saucepans, drying washing outside and venting and emptying the water in your tumble dryers often;
- Opening bedroom windows for 15 minutes each morning, allowing air to circulate and keeping your trickle vents open on your windows if you have them;
- Making sure your home is well insulated (if you feel that it isn't, please contact us);
- Heating your home at constant level (between 19 – 21°C), ventilating rooms regularly and leaving doors open allowing air to circulate (unless you're cooking or showering);
- Opening the window, putting the extraction fan on and closing the door of the room being used if you are cooking, showering or bathing.



## ***Extraction fans***

Extraction fans are designed to work for several minutes even after being switched off, some even remain on at all times to provide a background ventilation. This is important as moisture will remain in the air after bathing or showering. If repairs have been carried out to rectify leaks or to improve ventilation, several weeks of heating and ventilating may still be needed to make sure that any prior water ingress has completely dried out.

## ***Furniture***

Try to avoid placing furniture right up against external walls because this makes it difficult for air to circulate and encourages mould to grow (even on your furniture and inside your cupboards on clothes.)

## ***How to Remove Mould***

Protect yourself from mould spores by wearing goggles, rubber gloves, and a mask that covers your nose and mouth. Open the windows but keep doors closed to



prevent spores spreading to other areas of the house. Have a plastic bag ready to take away any soft furnishings, clothes and soft toys that are mouldy. Soft furnishings should be shampooed and clothes professionally dry cleaned.

Fill a bucket with water and cleaning product; there are many to choose at supermarkets. Using a cloth or sponge dipped in the water, carefully wipe the mould off the wall. Be careful not to use a brush on the mould as this can release mould spores. Use a dry cloth to remove the moisture from the wall afterwards, put the rags in a plastic bag and dispose of correctly. All the surfaces in the room should be

thoroughly cleaned by either wet wiping or vacuuming to remove any spores.

# Bleeding a Radiator

If your radiators are not heating up effectively, there may be air contained within the heating system that creates cold spots. This air needs to be released.

You will need a radiator key or a screwdriver (depending on the radiator type) and a thick cloth or towel.



1. Turn on your central heating as normal, making sure all the radiator valve are switched on, and wait for your heating to reach a normal, warm temperature.
2. Next, carefully identify which radiators need to be bled by checking for cold areas along the top.
3. Once you know which ones need to be bled, **turn off your central heating**. When all radiators are cool again and you are able to comfortably touch them, you can begin to bleed them.

***It is vital that you wait for all radiators and the water in your central heating system to become cold before you begin to do this.***



4. Place your cloth or towel directly beneath the pressure release valve (normally found in the top, right-hand corner of the radiator) to catch any water that drips down. Then, insert the radiator key or screwdriver into the valve and slowly turn anti-clockwise. Do not be alarmed if you hear a hissing noise; this is the trapped air being released from the radiator.

5. Once water begins to leak out of the radiator, you can stop the process and turn the radiator key/screwdriver clockwise to shut the valve again. ***It is vital that the valves are tightened sufficiently to avoid leaks.***

6. When you have bled all of the radiators that are required, check the pressure in your boiler to make sure that it is not below the level recommended in your boiler manual.

7. Now, turn the central heating back on and make sure that all radiators are now heating correctly.

# Unblocking Sinks & Shower Traps

Sink and shower traps can become blocked with hair and food waste, which can cause unpleasant smells. Prevention is always better than cure, so aim to avoid food waste and hair to enter the drainage system. There are also waste traps that can be purchased from local stores to collect any debris.



However, despite best intentions, sometimes blockages do occur. These simple steps will keep drainage in your home running freely.

- Run hot water through the sink after each use.
- If there is a blockage place a handful of baking soda into the plug hole, or pour a cup of vinegar down the sink, and let it sit for 30 minutes. Run some hot water into the sink and the blockage should clear.
- Alternatively, powerful drain cleaning agents can also be bought from DIY stockists or supermarkets. These are poured into the sink or shower and can dissolve the blockage. Always pay attention to the instructions on the pack before using these agents.



# Changing a Lightbulb

Light bulbs come in different shapes and sizes, but generally there are two types; a screw cap or a bayonet cap.



Screw Cap



Bayonet Cap

The easiest way to ensure a correct match is to remove the faulty bulb, following the guide below, and match the old bulb with the new one.

1. Turn off the power source. ***Never attempt to change a light bulb with the power still connected;***
2. Allow the bulb to cool;
3. Use a step ladder, or ask a taller member of the household to help to avoid over stretching, to remove the old bulb and insert the replacement bulb;
4. Switch the power back on;
5. Take the old light bulb to your local recycling centre or put them in your black bin.

# Cleaning Gutters

Gutters, downpipes, and gulley cleaning can play a very important part in the maintenance of a home. Blocked or overflowing gutters, and blocked outside drains, can cause serious damp problems which may result in major repair work.



Many gutters are at a low level and can be easily reached. If the gutter is overflowing, remove the blockage (which may be leaves, moss, food waste or debris), if possible.

This simple action may help to prevent more serious damp problems and extensive repairs.

Always make sure to use the correct equipment, and have someone with you at all times to assist you.

# Oiling Hinges, Handles, and Catches

Oiling door hinges and handles can prevent many problems that occur because of regular wear and tear, as well as preventing the build-up of rust.

The use of a thin oil (e.g. WD40) when handles or hinges become stiff may extend the life of the hinge or handles. Always read the instructions before use.



Loose kitchen door hinges can easily be tightened with a screw driver. This basic maintenance is particularly important because if the door becomes damaged and needs replacing, an exact match may not be possible.

Not tightening a loose screw could result in doors not being able to be closed, causing further damage by slamming doors shut.



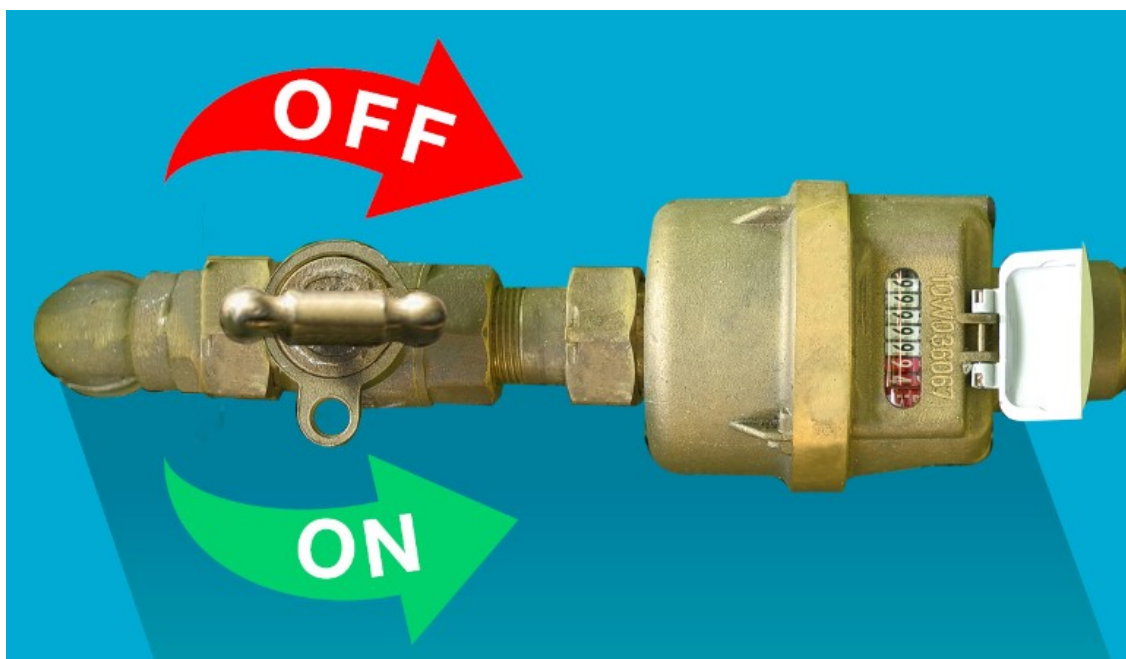
# Turning Off the Water Supply

You may need to turn off your water supply, using the stop tap or valve, if there is an emergency such as a burst pipe. Make sure you are aware of the location of your internal stop tap and check it's working regularly.

The stop valve is frequently located under the sink or in the entrance hallway of your home and will shut off the cold water coming into the property.

Some newer properties are also fitted with separate isolation valves in bathrooms, toilets, and kitchens.

These valves are chrome (known as ball-valves) with a simple slot fitting and should be turned horizontally to turn off the water supply. For example, if the toilet is leaking, just cutting off the supply to the toilet will mean that water can still flow to the rest of the home.



# Circuit Breakers

Modern electrical consumer units are very sensitive. Occasionally an appliance (e.g toaster, fridge, washer, dryer, kettle) may be faulty and cause the electric supply to trip, which means that the power to the property will be cut off.

If the electrical supply cuts out:

- Unplug all appliances in your home;
- Ensure if a token meter is in use, credit on the meter is available.
- Inspect the circuit breakers and RCD's (fuses) in the consumer unit
- Ensure all switches are down “in the off position”
- Push the main switch (which is normally red) upwards to the “on” position followed by the remaining switches.
- Plug appliances in one by one, in the event the electricity trips again do not use the appliance until tested to ensure no faults are present.



# Overloading Extension Leads

Extension leads should be avoided or only used as a temporary, short term solution.

Trailing leads are also a potential trip hazard, and overloading extension leads are a potential fire hazard. They can also overload the circuit breaker (fuse) causing the electrical supply to cut out.

Please try to avoid using these as a long term solution and, where used, please ensure that they are not overloaded.



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