



Lambeth Repairs Manual 2021



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Introduction

This Repairs Manual is for Lambeth Council tenants.

Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) manage most responsive repairs separately and for more information on TMO repairs you should contact your TMO [directly](#).

The Manual tells you which repairs are our responsibility, and which are yours. It outlines the different types of repairs and the timescales for completing them and what is available for those who may need a bit of support.

It explains the Right to Repair scheme and rechargeable repairs. It also gives advice on how to avoid problems and ‘top tips’ such as how to clear a blocked pipe or reduce condensation.



Our Contractors

We have divided the borough into two areas, north and south, each with its own contractors. Here are the repair contractors who work in each area:

North

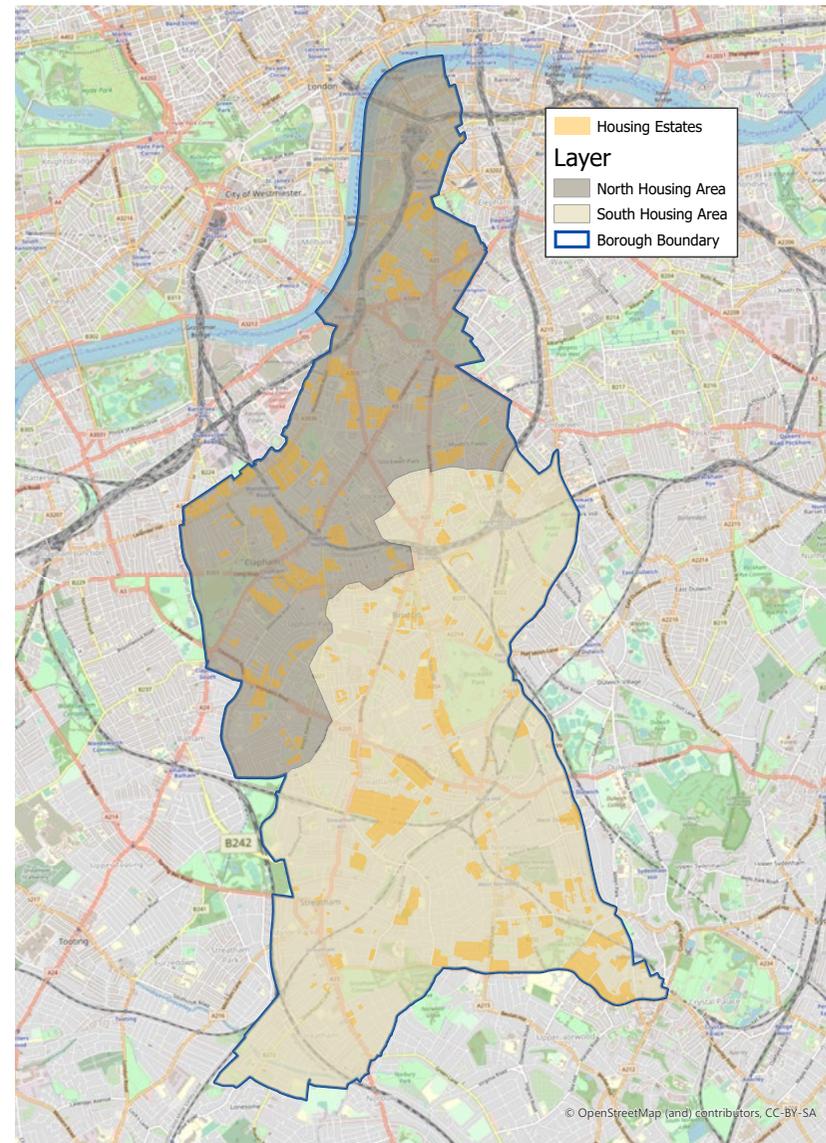
Contractor	Responsibility
Fortem Solutions Ltd	Responsive repairs and voids
T Brown Group Ltd	Communal Gas and Water Systems
MPS Housing Limited	Domestic Gas Works
NRT Group	Communal Electrical Works
RJ Lift Services	Lift Maintenance

South

Contractor	Responsibility
Wates Property Services Ltd	Responsive repairs and voids
OCO	Communal Gas and Water Systems
T Brown Group Ltd.	Domestic Gas Works
OpenView Security Solutions Ltd	Communal Electrical Works
Amalgamated Lifts Ltd	Lift Maintenance

Community Works

Community works is Lambeth Council's in-house repairs service with all staff employed by us. They carry out communal repairs and aids and adaptations across the whole borough.



How to report a repair



Online

If you need to request a non-emergency housing repair, you can do so via our website <https://beta.lambeth.gov.uk/housing/housing-repairs>



Call Centre

You can also contact us via the call centre. You will need to do this for repairs which are considered an emergency.

020 7926 6000

You can contact us from Monday – Friday 8am to 8pm or Saturday 8am to 1pm.

If you have an **emergency** outside these hours please call us on

020 7926 6666



Housing Offices

When the Housing Offices are open you can also report a repair when you visit us.



Tenants Portal

From October 2021 we are expanding the Lambeth Tenants' Portal. The Portal will include a 'Repair Diagnostic Tool'. You can click on pictures to properly identify the repair which is required, and we make sure that the correct repair order is raised. Please see the example below. Please note the portal is due to go live from **October 2021**. In the meantime you can raise repair requests by contacting the call centre. After the portal is live, **emergency** repairs should continue to be raised by contacting the Call Centre.

Create a housing online account today

If you don't already have an account it is very easy to set one up. Go to <https://myhousing.lambeth.gov.uk>

Or scan this QR code



If you have a problem registering or logging into your account, please contact us on 020 7926 8790 so we can help you.

Lambeth Tenants' Portal Repair Diagnostic Tool example screens

The screenshot shows the 'Categories of repair' screen with a grid of icons for: Baths and showers, Communal area services, Drainage and loofers, Electrical, External, Floors, walls and stairs, Gas and hot water, Kitchens and hobs, Lifts and hoists, Roofs, Sinks and basins, Toilets, Water services, Windows, and Lamp, music.

The second screenshot shows the 'Categories of repair > Sinks and basins' screen with the following options:

- Basin tap is dripping or leaking
- Pair of basin taps are broken
- Sink tap is dripping or leaking
- Pair of sink taps are broken
- Sink top is loose
- Plug and chain is damaged or missing
- Basin is loose or minor repair is needed
- Basin is blocked
- Water supply pipe has burst to basin
- Sink is blocked
- Water supply pipe has burst to sink
- Sink unit is collapsing

At the bottom, it says 'Stop tap or stopcock'.

Repair Service Standards

Customer care

The council has six general customer service standards which our contractors must also work to:

- ▶ We make it easy for you to access services and take responsibility to keep you informed.
- ▶ We resolve your queries at the first point of contact and keep you updated if it takes longer.
- ▶ We say sorry if we get things wrong and put it right quickly.
- ▶ We listen to your feedback and take it into account when making improvements to our service.
- ▶ We will only collect relevant material from you, store it safely and use it appropriately.
- ▶ We are an accessible and transparent council.

How repairs are prioritised

The following repair priorities are used to decide how urgent a repair is and how long it can take to fix. These priorities comply with the Right to Repair regulations (see [page 14](#)).

For R1-3 repairs, the response time starts the day after you report the repair to us. You will be offered options of repair appointment times depending on the priority of the repair. For example, for a when you report an R2 repair you will be offered future appointment slots from seven days up to 28 days from your initial call.

Type of repair	Response Time	Our priority Code
Urgent Emergency	Attend two Hours - Fix 24 Hours	EO1
Emergency	Fix Within One working day	EO2
Routine	Fix within seven days (or three days for certain qualifying repairs under the Right to Repair regulations)	R1
Routine	Fix Within 28 Working Days	R2
Planned	Complete Within 90 Days	R3

Repair priority codes

				
EO1: Urgent Emergency	EO2: Emergency	R1: Routine repairs	R2: Routine repair	R3: Planned repair
Attend two Hours - Fix 24 Hours	Fix Within One working day	Fix within seven days (or three days for certain qualifying repairs under the Right to Repair regulations)	Fix Within 28 Working Days	Complete Within 90 Days

Examples of typical routine repairs and the usual times we will offer appointments to carry out the repair

<p>A repair is an emergency when the problem could cause serious health and safety problems or severe damage if not fixed or made safe quickly. The same applies to repairs reported out of hours.</p> <p>Emergencies include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ lift breakdown ▶ toilet not working (if there is no other working toilet in the home) ▶ total loss of electrical power ▶ total loss of mains water supply. 	<p>Between one and three days;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ repairing a front door lock ▶ securing a loose or broken handrail ▶ tap which can't be turned ▶ blocked sink, bath or basin. <p>Between one and seven days;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ repairing estate lighting ▶ repairing a leaking bath ▶ repairing a manhole cover ▶ extractor fan not working. 	<p>Between seven days and 28 days;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ repairing your ceiling ▶ pram sheds. 	<p>Between 28 days up to 90 days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ clearing gutters ▶ plaster work after repairs have been carried out ▶ non-urgent work to prevent problems arising in the future.
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Please note – we may not meet our timescales if we need access to another property to fix a repair but cannot get in (for example, if water is dripping through your ceiling we will need to trace and get access to the flat causing the leak to fix the leak). However, depending on the circumstances we can force our way in if necessary.

Appointment times

Our contractors work Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm, and Saturday mornings, except public holidays. We will try our best to give you an appointment that suits you; however, please try to be flexible so we can complete the repair within the target time.

The appointment slots are Monday - Friday:

Time		
08:00 to 13:00	13:00 to 18:00	18:00 to 20:00
10:00 to 14:00		

We will offer you a morning, afternoon or evening appointment. This means the contractor may arrive any time within the appointment period.

On Saturday appointments are available in the morning:

08:00 to 13:00

Tracking your repair

When you make the appointment, you can ask us to keep you up to date via text message. If you request this service, we will send you a reminder the day before the appointment, and another message when the contractor is on the way. A text message is also sent when you raise a repair confirming the appointment details.

From October 2021, when the repairs module goes live, you will also be able to track what repairs have been ordered on your estate and block by logging into your tenant account.

Keeping in touch

If for any reason you need to change the appointment, please let us know as soon as possible. You can do this via the portal or by calling the customer service centre. Please try to give at least three days' notice if possible and quote your repairs order number.

How to identify our workers

Our staff and contractors all carry ID cards.

If a staff member or contractor cannot show their ID card, do not let them into your property. Report the incident to us on 020 7926 6000 or to the police.

Repair Responsibilities

As outlined in the Lambeth Tenancy Agreement we will:

- ▶ maintain the structure and outside of your property
- ▶ maintain your property's drains, stack pipes, gutters and outside pipes
- ▶ keep in proper working order any fittings for supplying water, gas or electricity, toilet facilities and water heating inside your property. If we decide the repair is not possible then we will replace the fittings.

The council is also responsible for carrying out repairs and maintenance to parts of the external fabric of our housing blocks and estates. This includes including communal equipment and areas you share with your neighbours like shared fire protection measures, shared staircases, balconies and walkways and other shared services like lifts and door entry systems.

Recharges

Recharges will occur when tenants and leaseholders cause wilful damage to their property or where we undertake a repair which is the responsibility of the occupant. Tenants and leaseholders are responsible for the conduct of all persons in their household, including any visitors, inside their property and communal areas or on the estate.

Accidental damage arising from reasonable behaviour will not be penalised.

We will also apply recharges to contractors and agents working on Lambeth Council estates and third parties who cause damage.

Examples where we can apply a recharge for include:

- ▶ Correcting damage that resulted from wilful acts abuse, neglect or recklessness.
- ▶ To reimburse for works carried out which are the responsibility of the occupant (e.g. cutting back a tree in a tenant's garden or key replacement). Where the work is not an emergency the resident will be expected to pay upfront before any work is carried out.
- ▶ Correcting any work carried out by the resident that was substandard or unauthorised.
- ▶ Additional work undertaken as a direct result of the resident breaking their tenancy/lease agreement for example not leaving their home clean and tidy on departure.
- ▶ Costs associated with legal action and the cost of any damage if we have to force entry to your home to carry out a repair or for gas servicing.

If there has been criminal damage you would not be recharged but may be required to provide a crime reference number.

If you have been the victim of domestic abuse we will not recharge.



Our repair responsibilities

We are not responsible for all the repairs in your home. Below is a list of some of the most common repairs the council is responsible for:

- ▶ Aids and adaptations
- ▶ Baths
- ▶ Blockages (unless caused by you)
- ▶ Ceiling repairs
- ▶ Central Heating
- ▶ Communal repairs
- ▶ Decoration (outside)
- ▶ Door entry system
- ▶ Doors (outside / front door)
- ▶ Electrical wiring
- ▶ Extractor fans
- ▶ Fences
- ▶ Floors (not floor coverings like carpet)
- ▶ Gas boilers
- ▶ Glazing (unless broken by you)
- ▶ Guttering
- ▶ Hot water
- ▶ Kitchen units (as part of planned replacement programme)
- ▶ Lifts
- ▶ Light switches
- ▶ Plaster finishing (except minor cracks)
- ▶ Radiators
- ▶ Roof
- ▶ Skirting boards
- ▶ Stair
- ▶ Stop cocks
- ▶ Taps (except washer replacement)
- ▶ Toilet pan and cistern
- ▶ Windows (frames, sills and vents)



Your repair responsibilities

You are responsible for keeping your home clean, internal decoration, repairing any damages caused by you or anyone living or visiting your homes, the upkeep of anything not provided by the council and for minor repairs including:

- ▶ Blockages. You must keep wastes and drains clear to prevent them becoming blocked, and also try to clear any blockages.
- ▶ Cookers, including installation or disconnection
- ▶ Curtain battens, poles or rails
- ▶ Doors (internal doors)
- ▶ Electricity and gas meters
- ▶ Floor coverings such as carpets or vinyl you have laid yourself (to note laminate flooring is only allowed if there is no one living beneath you because it is noisy when walked on an can cause a nuisance to neighbours)
- ▶ Forced entry damage caused by police after criminal activity
- ▶ Garden maintenance including looking after any trees
- ▶ Glazing
- ▶ Key and fob replacements
- ▶ Kitchen units (door catches, handles and hinges)
- ▶ Locks
- ▶ Light bulbs
- ▶ Limescale removal
- ▶ Mould – you should wipe away any mould using a proprietary cleaner.
- ▶ Plug chains to baths, sinks and basins
- ▶ Radiator bleeding
- ▶ Sealants to bath
- ▶ Sheds in the garden
- ▶ Toilet seats
- ▶ Tiling or grouting
- ▶ Windows (handles, locks, draught excluders)

Decorations

You must keep the inside of your home reasonably well decorated. We are responsible for outside decoration. However, if you would like to do external decoration yourself, you must get our permission first and supply a written plan of how you are going to do the work.

We will repair any decorations that are damaged because of other work we have done, or we will (if we choose to) pay you a decoration allowance instead.

If you are elderly, vulnerable or have a disability, and there is no other member of your household or family who can help, we may be able to decorate certain rooms in your home under a planned programme.

Home improvements

If you are a secure tenant and you want to carry out alterations or improvements to your property, you must get written permission from us to do so. You may also need planning permission or building regulations approval. You are responsible for getting this permission and paying any resulting fees.

If you carry out improvements to your property (with our permission) and you later move, you may be entitled to compensation. This depends on how long ago you made the improvements and the type you made. You must get a valuation before and after the work is done so we know how much compensation is reasonable for us to pay.

What you need to do

Access to your home

You must make sure that either you or another responsible adult is present at the appointed time so what we can have access to your home to carry out the repair. If we cannot get in, we may charge you for our time or the contractor's time or both.

If you are out when we visit, we will leave a card and send you a text message to let you know that we have called. It is your responsibility to contact us and re-book the repair.

In an emergency, we may need to force entry if you fail to let us in after we have given you notice. We may recharge you for any repair or damage caused.

We may also need access to your property to inspect after the repair has been completed, to make sure the contractor has sorted out the problem. If you are out during this inspection visit, we will assume the repair is satisfactory, unless you tell us otherwise. Please allow us to make this inspection as it helps us to ensure we are providing a good service.

Gas servicing and maintenance

By law, we must check all our gas appliances and pipe work for leaks that could cause an explosion or carbon monoxide poisoning. We do this by carrying out a yearly safety check through a contractor on the Gas Safe Register.

After the safety check, you will be sent a copy of the gas certificate will be sent to you in the post. The contractor will offer an appointment when the annual service is due. They will make the appointment to suit you where possible, but please try to be flexible as well.

We may take legal action against you if you do not let us complete your annual gas safety check. This may mean a court order requiring you to let the contractor into your home or allowing us to force entry into your home to carry out the safety check.

To stop us taking legal action, you must let us know if you are going to be away due to holiday or sickness for any length of time.

Please note – you are responsible for safety checks on any gas appliances you own, such as a gas cooker.

Smoke alarms

We fit smoke detectors or alarms for your safety. You should test them each week by pressing the 'test' button. The alarm will sound briefly if they are working correctly. If you hear the alarm at any other time, check for fire.

If a battery-operated alarm is installed in your home, it is your responsibility to replace the battery. When you change a battery, make sure it is the correct type and always use a new one. After you have changed the battery, test the alarm to make sure it is working – never assume it is. When a battery starts to run low, the alarm will make an occasional beeping sound to warn you that the battery needs to be replaced. The alarm will still operate if smoke is detected, but the longer you take to change the battery, the weaker the alarm will become. If you do not change the battery, the alarm will eventually stop beeping and will not detect smoke in an emergency.

Do not try to remove a mains-operated smoke alarm from the ceiling.

If a mains-operated smoke alarm starts beeping randomly, it may be due to:

- ▶ sudden changes in air temperature (draughts)
- ▶ dust
- ▶ insects
- ▶ smoke or steam.

If the alarm beeps, this does not mean it is faulty or will not go off. Dust your smoke alarms regularly and vacuum them occasionally to remove dust or small insects.

Preparing for an appointment

Once you have a date and time for your repair, you should make the area ready for the contractor to come and do the repair. This may involve moving furniture, lifting your floor coverings, and clearing possessions away from the area. For example, please clear out items stored under the sink if there is a leak.

Contractors will not be able to clear an area or room before fixing the repair. We will not be responsible for any damage caused to items that have not been moved away from the area. The same applies for pre-repair inspections, particularly when we are trying to detect leaks.

If you are elderly, vulnerable or need extra help when someone comes to fix the repair (including preparing the area for the contractor) please let us know when you report your repair. We will pass the information to our contractors and they will be able to assist.

Staying safe and Covid-19

If there are Covid-19 restrictions in place then these should be followed:

- ▶ Please contact us if you or anyone in your household is showing symptoms of Covid-19 or if you've been asked to self-isolate and your appointment can be rearranged.
- ▶ Where appropriate, please wipe down the area with a household disinfectant beforehand and keep windows open to allow ventilation.
- ▶ Always allow at least a two-metre distance between yourself and the repair operative and remain in a separate room while the repair takes place.
- ▶ Leave doors open to allow access to the area where work is taking place.
- ▶ Please provide access to hand-washing facilities.
- ▶ Keep pets away from the repair operative.
- ▶ Do not offer any food or drink.

Supporting Vulnerable Tenants

As a caring social landlord, we aim to look after tenants who may need some extra support. Those who are over the age of 75 or with disabilities or with limiting long term illness will have access to Property MOTs, a comprehensive property inspection to identify necessary repairs and assess the need for property adaptations to enable the tenant to sustain their tenancy. The Property MOT will also assess potential fire risks and the works necessary to reduce them. Where necessary, cases will be referred to the Home Improvement Agency for specialist installations.

Vulnerable tenants have their repairs prioritised for quicker action. They may also be supported by the council with help to maintain their gardens and carrying out certain repairs which would normally be a tenant's responsibility. The housing office will consider the individual circumstances, including who else lives in the property, when deciding whether to carry out discretionary repairs.

Residents should contact the housing office if they would like us to note when we are raising a repair for them that they need extra support.

If things go wrong

We always aim to provide you with a good service and carry out regular surveys to monitor how well we are performing.

If you feel that we have not met your expectations, then please contact us. We may inspect the repair and if we decide that it has not been done properly, we can ask the contractor to do the repair again.

Right to repair

The Government has set target timescales for carrying out particular repairs. The Right to Repair scheme gives tenants a legal right to have these repairs done on time. If we do not meet the target times, you can ask us to get another contractor to do the work within the same length of time. If the work is still not done, you may be entitled to claim compensation. Alternatively, you can appoint your own contractor to do the work and we will pay for it. Qualifying repairs, and how long we have to do them is listed in the table below.

Repair type	Response time (working days)
Total loss of electric power	1
Partial loss of electric power	3
Unsafe power or lighting socket or electrical fitting	1
Total loss of water supply	1
Partial loss of water supply	3
Total or partial loss of gas supply	1
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1
Heating or hot water not working between 31 October and 1 May	1
Heating or hot water not working between 1 May and 31 October	3

Repair type	Response time (working days)
Blocked/leaking foul drain, soil stack or toilet	1
Toilet not flushing (if there is only one toilet in the property)	1
Blocked sink, bath, or basin	3
Tap cannot be turned	3
Leak from a water pipe, tank, or cistern	1
Leaking roof	7
Insecure external window, door, or lock	1
Loose or detached banister or hand rail	3
Rotten timber flooring or stair tread	3
Door entry phone not working	7
Mechanical extractor fan not working	7

Temporary relocation

If you cannot stay in your property while a repair is being completed, we will discuss moving you to another property temporarily.

Making a complaint



We strive to deliver excellent customer care through our standards but sometimes things will go wrong. Should you need to raise a complaint, the easiest way to do this is online. <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/forms/lambeth-housing-feedback-form> When you make a complaint please tell us as much as you can about what went wrong, when it happened, who you dealt with and how you would like the matter resolved. The service area will acknowledge your complaint within two working days and will respond to you within 20 working days.



If you want to talk to someone call us on 020 7926 9694.



If you'd prefer to put your complaint in writing, please email complaints@lambeth.gov.uk.

Mediation



Landlords and tenants can have disagreements which sometimes end up in court. Mediation is the quickest way of reaching a fair resolution and may be offered and avoids the need to go to court.

Communal repairs

Communal repairs are repairs to shared parts of a building or estate, rather than to an individual home. Examples include repairs to lifts, external lights, or shared front doors.

Estate walkabouts and Estate Action Plan

We carry out regular estate walkabouts to identify communal repairs. We advertise these events widely. Resident representatives and local councillors often attend, and all residents are welcome to come with us.

Please also tell us if you notice that a communal repair is needed. We will want to know what the repair is and the exact location of it. For example, please tell us the nearest address, or give us the set of numbers that can be found on the nearest external light columns or lifts.

We work with residents to establish estate actions plans on larger estates. These cover local priorities. Please see <https://eap.lambeth.gov.uk/> for details about any plans for your estate.

Leaks and overflows

While not strictly communal, leaks and overflows from a particular property can affect the structure of the building or other flats. Sometimes you may not be aware of a leak from your property that could be affecting others in the building. An overflow, where water runs down the outside of a building, can cause a lot of damage to the building.

In these circumstances we may need access to your flat, even if you are unaware of the problem. Please let us in, even if it may cause you some inconvenience. In an emergency we may have to force entry into your property to solve a problem affecting others. We will normally give you some warning but may need immediate access if we cannot contact you and the situation is critical.

Community Works

Lambeth's in-house repairs service, Community Works, is responsible for a range of communal repairs including:

- ▶ Paving / Block Paving / bollards / kerb edgings / pothole repairs
- ▶ Flooring to: Entrance Areas / Stairwells / Landings
- ▶ Carpentry repairs to: Entrance Area, Stairwell and Landings – doors, windows, handles, locks, glazing – not electronic door entry system
- ▶ Bin Chute Repairs / Replacement not blockages
- ▶ Plumbing – blockages to the communal stack, trace, and remedy leaks to communal areas
- ▶ Drainage – Blocked communal drains and sewers / replacement manhole / gully / grid covers
- ▶ Communal Gutters and Downpipes
- ▶ Communal Doors – intake cupboard doors / lift motor room doors / cold water storage room doors
- ▶ Finishes – paint repairs including vandalism / minor plaster / render repairs
- ▶ Communal Gates and Fencing

Helpful information

Insurance

Building insurance

We have insured our properties against the following risks:

- ▶ fire
- ▶ lightning
- ▶ explosions
- ▶ aircraft crashes
- ▶ riot and public disturbances
- ▶ malicious damage by political organisations
- ▶ some other types of damage.

Home contents insurance

We will not insure the contents of your home. We strongly recommend that you take out home contents insurance. Insuring your belongings can save you a lot of money if they are stolen or damaged. For example, if your home is accidentally flooded from the flat above yours, you may be able to claim compensation from an insurance company. We would only have to pay if you could prove we had been careless in some way.

Look around for the best insurance policy and make sure it is with a reputable company. It is important to include third party cover in case anyone makes a claim against you, for example if you leave a tap running and flood your neighbour's home. We can arrange home contents insurance for tenants through a low-cost scheme.

Lambeth Council have teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks and Allianz Insurance plc to offer our tenants and leaseholders the chance to insure their home contents and belongings through the Crystal Insurance Scheme at a competitive rate.

To find out more ask your housing officer for an application pack or call Crystal Insurance Scheme on 0345 450 7286 or visit www.crystal-insurance.co.uk, where you can request a call back.

Taking care with gas

Gas or fume leaks

If you suspect you have a gas leak, or fumes are coming from any appliance, **act immediately**.

- ▶ If you can turn off the gas supply, **do so at the main 'on' and 'off' lever**, which is next to the gas meter. Make sure you know where the 'on' and 'off' lever is before you need to use it.
- ▶ Immediately **call National Grid Gas on freephone 0800 111 999**.
- ▶ **Open doors and windows**. This will allow any build-up of gas to escape.
- ▶ **Do not use any electrical equipment**, including lighting and power switches or mobile phones. Do not use any naked flames such as candles or matches.
- ▶ **Do not smoke in your home** until National Grid Gas says you can.
- ▶ **Seek urgent medical attention** if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning.

Never try to deal with any gas leaks or faults yourself – gas leaks can be dangerous. If you smell gas outside, call National Grid Gas freephone on 0800 111 999 straight away. Don't wait for someone else to do it.

Tips for dealing with gas

If you are having a gas appliance or equipment fitted, always use a Gas Safe registered engineer. You can find such an engineer by visiting www.gassaferegister.co.uk.

- ▶ You will be responsible for all charges.
- ▶ Do not try to deal with gas problems yourself.
- ▶ For your own safety, find out where the mains gas supply tap is. It is called an emergency control valve and is usually near the meter. Make sure you know how to turn it off. If the tap needs a key to operate it, the key must be fixed to the tap.
- ▶ If you use a communal gas supply, make sure you know where the emergency control valve is. It is usually in the kitchen or in a cupboard inside your home.

- ▶ Before you switch off the mains supply, turn off all gas appliances and pilot lights. Turn the mains gas tap to the 'off' position (see the diagrams inside the cover of this manual). This is when the notched line of the tap points across the pipe.
- ▶ Depending on why you turned the supply off, you may need a Gas Safe registered engineer to turn the supply back on. This is known as testing, purging, and commissioning, a recognised procedure used in the gas industry.
- ▶ If you do not need a Gas Safe registered engineer before you turn the mains supply back on, make sure all gas appliances and pilot lights are still turned off. Put the mains gas tap back to the 'on' position. It is on when the notched line lies along the pipe. Then light the pilot lights on appliances.
- ▶ If your mains tap is stiff and won't turn properly, don't force it. If you are not sure about any problems with gas, call us on 020 7926 6000.
- ▶ If while doing an annual gas safety check, a Gas Safe registered engineer finds that any gas appliance or equipment you installed is defective, they will turn it off. If you turn it back on and it causes an incident, you will be liable for the damage caused.
- ▶ Never turn on the gas to a cooker until you are ready to light the burner or water heater until the pilot is on.
- ▶ If you have a charge key or slot meter and the gas runs out, turn off all gas taps before you put money in the meter. When the gas comes on, check that all pilot lights are lit.
- ▶ Make sure there is plenty of ventilation around gas appliances and water heaters.

Condensation

Condensation often results from modern lifestyles, improvements to windows, doors and roofs, and the installation of central heating systems. Central heating changes the way air flows around rooms. Warm, moist air, which would otherwise have escaped through chimneys, windows and doors, gets trapped inside your home.

Condensation appears when moisture vapour meets a cold surface. You can see it as water droplets on the walls, ceilings and windows. This can lead to a spread of black mould if not cleared away. You can greatly reduce condensation in your home by taking these few simple precautions:

- ▶ Do not dry clothes on radiators.
- ▶ Open windows and cover pans when cooking.
- ▶ Run cold water into the bath before adding hot water.
- ▶ Do not block up air vents in walls and doors.
- ▶ Clean away any mould that appears on walls, ceilings or windows with a suitable cleaning solution.
- ▶ Do not vent a tumble dryer into a room.
- ▶ Shut kitchen or bathroom doors when using extractor fans.
- ▶ Open windows regularly to replace damp air with dry air, especially in the morning. Ten minutes is a sufficient time.



For more about avoiding and managing condensation, please see link to a video <https://youtu.be/8FQMUHvrJIQ>. You can also get advice through the 'Damp Medic' on your portal.

Please contact us if you still can't remove black mould or damp after taking this advice.

Asbestos

If your home was built before 2000, some parts of the building are likely to contain asbestos. Asbestos is found in many products used in buildings, including ceiling tiles, pipe insulation, boilers and coatings such as Artex.

The Health and Safety Executive website has a useful website showing areas where asbestos can be found, www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/building.htm.

Asbestos-containing materials in good condition are not a risk to people's health. In our properties we try to make sure that anything that may contain asbestos remains in good condition, is sealed with paint and has a warning sign against it. If you suspect that materials containing asbestos have been damaged, contact us immediately on 020 7926 6000. Damage to asbestos-containing materials can occur during 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) activities. See below for tips on avoiding exposure during DIY.

- ▶ You should contact us before doing work if you think asbestos is present. We can tell you whether asbestos-containing materials are present in the area where you plan to work.
- ▶ Don't drill, cut into, sand or scrape anything you think may contain asbestos.
- ▶ Always soak wallpaper before removing it. If possible, use a steam stripper and gently peel away the paper before redecorating.
- ▶ Don't try to remove textured coatings (Artex) from ceilings. Wash any area of flaking paint with sugar soap before repainting.
- ▶ Don't try to remove old floor tiles or linoleum. Leave them in place and lay new floor coverings over them.

By law we must maintain an Asbestos Register. The asbestos register is essential to managing asbestos in our properties. It lists all materials that are either presumed to contain asbestos or have been confirmed to contain asbestos after laboratory sampling and analysis.

You may request information from the register about your home.

Remember, materials containing asbestos are safe if they are in good condition and are not moved or interfered with.

'How to' videos

One of our contractors has produced a series of videos giving you advice on how to carry out simple DIY tasks such as how to bleed a radiator, unblock a sink and repair a kitchen unit. There are also energy saving tips. Please go to <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4CZDBIZmoOeRSMPnIsMYIICUFgDxRKkl> for more details.



Clearing a blocked waste pipe



Unblocking a basin or sink

'P' trap



Bottle trap



Plunger



Unblocking a toilet



Toilet brush

Avoiding toilet blockages

Air fresheners that attach to the rim of the toilet pan should be fastened securely so they do not fall in and cause a blockage. Blockages are usually caused by objects such as:

- ▶ nappies
- ▶ toys
- ▶ sanitary towels
- ▶ wipes

If a blockage happens as a result of these objects getting stuck, we may charge you for clearing it. You should try to unblock this yourself to avoid being recharged.

To unblock a toilet

- ▶ If the pan is already full, remove some of the water into a bucket using a scoop, for example a jug or a bowl.
- ▶ Push the plunger to the bottom of the pan.
- ▶ Pump it up and down vigorously about 10 times. This creates a pressure vacuum, which may shift the blockage.
- ▶ When the blockage has disappeared, pour water from a bucket into the pan and see if it clears. You may need to repeat this process several times before the toilet flushes normally. If there is no improvement after a couple of tries, you should contact us.

Thoroughly wash your hands and all equipment after you have finished.

Avoiding sink, basin or bath blockages

Blockages to a kitchen sink, basin or bath waste pipes are usually caused by a build-up of:

- ▶ Fat, tea leaves or food debris
- ▶ hair in the waste trap.

Note – use a suitable product available from most DIY stores to clear waste pipes and traps. Do not use caustic soda as it destroys modern plastic fittings.

The trap is under the bath, basin or sink. It always holds some water, which stops air and foul smells coming up the pipe. However, waste material can build up and cause a blockage.

To unblock a sink, basin or bath You will need:

- ▶ a bowl
- ▶ a jug or cup
- ▶ a rag or dishcloth
- ▶ a plunger
- ▶ rubber gloves.

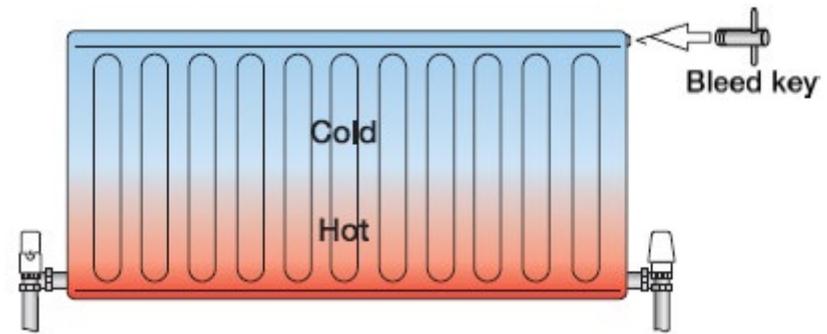
Then:

- ▶ remove most of the water, so the sink is half full
- ▶ wet the rag and hold it tightly over the overflow opening and place the plunger over the plug hole and pump up and down rapidly.
- ▶ If the sink, basin or bath is blocked, the blockage may be in the soil stack or main drain. We will need to clear this.

Heating – bleeding your radiators

Air in radiators can be a common fault in some heating systems, but it is easy to put right.

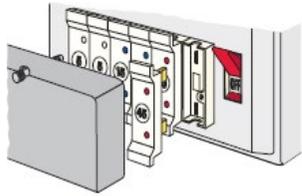
If the radiator is cold at the top and hot at the bottom, you will need to bleed it.



How to bleed your radiators

- ▶ Turn off the central heating.
- ▶ Insert a radiator bleed key into the radiator bleed vent
- ▶ Turn the key anti-clockwise to a maximum of one turn. You should hear a hiss as air escapes.
- ▶ As soon as water starts to appear at the bleed vent, turn off the vent by turning the key clockwise – do not over-tighten.
- ▶ Hold a cloth underneath the radiator bleed vent to catch any escaping water.
- ▶ Turn on the central heating and re-check the radiator.

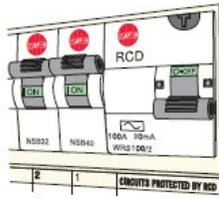
Fuse box



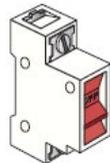
Fuse board



Consumer unit



Trip switches



Circuit breaker

Many homes are now installed with modern fuse boxes called ‘consumer units’, which contain circuit breakers or trip switches. If a fault occurs, these circuit breakers switch off to prevent injury and damage. If you do not have trip switches in your home and have fuses that can be rewired, please don’t try to repair or replace them. Contact us to arrange an appointment.

Trip switches can operate for various reasons, including:

- ▶ an overloaded circuit – for instance, too many appliances being used at the same time
- ▶ faulty or misused appliances – for example, cookers and extension leads
- ▶ dirty cookers or toasters
- ▶ overfilled kettles
- ▶ faulty immersion heaters
- ▶ light bulbs blowing.

If your lighting circuit goes off, check that the trip switches marked ‘lights’ are switched on. If any are off, turn off the main switch (usually the red one at the end), reset the circuit breaker and turn the main switch back on. Check to see which lamp has ‘blown’. If your sockets go off, unplug everything and turn off the main switch (this is usually the red one at the end), reset the circuit breaker and turn the main switch back on. Go around your property plugging appliances back in until you find the one with the fault. You may need to have the appliance replaced or repaired by a qualified electrician. If an appliance is faulty, do not put the plug back in.

Warning – never tamper with the electricity company’s fuse, meter or seals. You should contact your electricity supplier.



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