Shared Areas

If you live in a block of flats or a maisonette and you see a problem in any of the shared areas, it is your responsibility to report it as soon as possible. Examples are:

- faults with the door entry system
- internal fire doors not closing properly
- broken glazing or damaged doors
- obstructions in corridors or stairways
- fly tipping
- combustible items being stored in communal areas such as recycling bins.
Services we can provide

Aids and Adaptations

We try very hard to meet the needs of disabled and less mobile tenants.

If you have a disability you may request an adaptation to your home to make it easier or safer for you to live there.

If you think you would benefit from an adaptation or special equipment within your property please contact our HomeMove Advisor.

Our HomeMove Advisor will work with you to decide how best we can meet your needs. If you require major adaptations to your property we will explore the range of housing options available to you and assist you to find the most suitable option for your needs.

Safety in your home

Gas

If you think you smell gas at your property call 0800 111 999 who will advise you what to do.

And Don’t
• turn electric switches on or off
• smoke
• use naked flames

We carry out a full service and safety check on your gas appliances each year. This is done to protect you and your family. If you ever require any other gas work doing at your home you must always use an Approved Gas Fitter.

Garden Services

We offer a basic gardening service to tenants who are unable to manage their garden. This is a limited service and we can only offer it to tenants who meet the requirements of the scheme. Tenants must be in receipt of either Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance. However a tenant will not qualify if they have a capable relative living in the borough. For more information or an application form please contact Customer Services.

Burst Water Pipes

When water freezes it expands and the extra pressure can cause the pipe to burst.

Burst pipes can damage your home and your belongings. You can avoid them by doing the following:
• Ensure you know where your stop tap is and that it can be easily turned on or off
• Ensure that taps are not left dripping
• Report running overflows to us
• Cover outside taps to protect them from frost
• Lag pipes that are on an outside wall or in an unheated area
• If you are leaving the house for a few days in very cold weather, we recommend you set your heating to come on low a couple of times a day to avoid your pipes from freezing.

Asbestos

Asbestos was used extensively in houses up until 2000. If damaged, asbestos can be a risk to your health. We have an asbestos register and take action to manage the asbestos in our properties. If there is asbestos in your property you will be told where it is and how to manage it.

If you are at all concerned please contact Customer Services who will arrange for a surveyor to visit.

Lifeline

Lifeline is a 24 hour supported telephone system that helps elderly or disabled tenants; especially those living alone. In an emergency the tenant can contact the control centre who can arrange for a relative or friend to visit. For more information, please contact Customer Services.
Kettering Borough Council

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service offer a free Home Fire Safety Check. They will visit and give advice and guidance on how to prevent fires and other hazards. Please see the ‘How to Contact Us’ leaflet for ways to book your safety check.

Smoke alarm

Working smoke alarms save lives.

Your smoke alarm is powered from the mains electricity, indicated by a green light, and has a battery for back up in case of a power failure. You are responsible for making sure that the battery is working. The battery needs changing if a red light is showing or a beep can be heard from the alarm.

Testing and Changing the Battery

To test the battery, turn off the mains power supply to the alarm circuit. The green light should go off. Then press the test button. If the alarm does not give a continuous sound, the battery will need to be changed.

To change the battery, turn off the mains power to the alarm circuit and check that the green light is off. Open the battery compartment and replace the battery. Then push the test button to test the new battery. If the smoke alarm gives a continuous sound, the battery is working. Remember to turn the mains power back on, and the green light will appear. Please note that some smoke alarms do not have replaceable batteries. Where this is the case, details will be written on the cover of the alarm.

Testing the Mains Power

If the green light is on, push the test button to confirm the smoke alarm is working. The alarm should give a continuous sound to show that the mains power is working. We strongly advise that the alarm is tested weekly and the battery is changed annually.

If your smoke alarm does not have a green light or a replaceable battery please contact Customer Services and ask for your surveyor.

How you should look after your home

Property Condition

- You must keep your home clean and tidy
- To reduce the risk of fire you must not allow paper or other rubbish to pile up in your home
- External drains must be kept clear and clean
- All fixtures and fittings on the premises must be used for the correct purpose. For instance, you should not put oil or liquid fat down the sink or flush disposable nappies, wipes or sanitary items down the toilet
- If we have to rectify or repair any items because you have used them incorrectly you will be charged for the cost of the work.

Chimney sweeping

We do not sweep open fire chimneys. If we installed a solid fuel appliance we will service it and sweep its chimney once a year. If you use the appliance as your main source of heating you are responsible for arranging any extra sweeps.

Frozen Water Pipes

If you turn on a tap and no water comes out, you may have a frozen pipe. If you suspect this, and are able, turn off the main stopcock straight away. This is usually in the kitchen or bathroom. We recommend that you periodically turn your stopcock on and off throughout the year to avoid it getting stuck. Switch off the water heater if you have one, and switch off the time clock to the central heating boiler. Then report the problem to Customer Services.
Damp and Condensation

Most problems with damp are caused by condensation. Bathrooms, kitchens and windows and corners of rooms suffer mostly. If condensation builds up it can damage your decorations and cause mould to grow. There are three main causes of condensation:

• Too much moisture in the air
• Not enough ventilation in a room
• Not enough heat in a room.

Things you should do to prevent condensation:

• Vent tumble driers to the outside
• Avoid drying clothes indoors especially on radiators
• Keep lids on saucepans
• Open windows after bathing or cooking
• Use extractor fans where fitted
• Open trickle vents in double glazing
• Don’t block air vents
• Mop up any water running down windows
• Do not put large furniture too close to an outside wall where air cannot circulate.

Mould

Condensation can lead to mould growth on walls, ceilings and furniture and will also cause wooden window frames to rot. Mould is a fungus and the spores will spread into the air giving off a musty smell. There is also evidence that persistent mould growth may cause breathing and lung problems.

If able, we expect you to remove mould by wiping down or spraying walls with a fungicidal wash or anti mould cleaner. You may need to remove wallpaper and treat the surface underneath. Rising damp will only occur on the ground floor and usually no higher than a metre above ground level. There is usually little or no mould where there is rising damp. If you are concerned about damp, please contact Customer Services who will arrange for a surveyor to visit your property.

Insurance

We insure the structure of your home and any shared areas in flats and maisonettes. We do not insure your furniture, decorations or personal items against theft, fire, vandalism, burst pipes, broken windows etc.

If your belongings become damaged you are responsible for replacing them.

We therefore strongly advise you to take out adequate contents insurance.

We work with an insurance company that offers excellent insurance cover especially for tenants. For a few pence a day you can protect your belongings from damage. You can pay weekly, fortnightly or monthly and it is very simple to set up the cover.

Please speak to your Neighbourhood Manager for more information. If you choose to set up your own contents insurance please make sure that it covers glazing and locks.

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Security

Theft from insecure cars and premises is the most common crime in this country. Try to avoid becoming a victim by doing the following:

• When you go out close all windows and lock both front and back doors.
• Do not leave keys under the doormat or hanging on a string behind the letterbox.
• If you have written permission for a pet flap, make sure that its position does not allow someone to reach through and open a door or window.
• If you live in a flat with a door entry system, never prop open the main door or leave it on the latch.
• Always cancel regular deliveries, like newspapers, before you go away.
• Consider asking someone to mow your front lawn whilst you are away.
• Consider asking someone to put out your rubbish and recycling bins.
• Check the identity of all callers before you let them in. If you are in doubt, check them out by phoning their company and close the door whilst making the call.

All Kettering Borough Council staff and contractors carry identity cards. Always ask to see them.