



Other useful information

Living in your neighbourhood

All of the following points are intended to assist you with your home and to ensure you and your neighbours live harmoniously. Remember, your home is not to be used for business purposes, nor for any illegal purpose, and we expect all our tenants to have consideration for their neighbours.

Noise

We ask all residents to show consideration for their neighbours and to avoid making excessive noise by playing music, radios, TV's too loudly. Everyone has a different view of what is an acceptable level of noise, but it is important to take account of your neighbours' feelings.

Pets

If you want to keep a pet like a cat or a dog in your home, you must obtain permission from your Area Housing Office. We won't refuse permission unless we think your pet will cause a nuisance or annoyance to other residents or that the property is unsuitable for the type of pet you wish to keep. If you are thinking of moving and already have a pet, first check with the Area Housing Office whether you can take your pet with you. We do not usually allow residents to keep dogs or cats in flats.

Communal areas

If you live in a block of flats or you share areas with other residents, e.g. hallways, staircases, sitting out areas, please remember to keep them clean and tidy at all times. In certain circumstances the Association will clean some of these areas, but your assistance and co-operation will keep your service costs down.

Rubbish

It is important that residents use the proper facilities for depositing their refuse, and the Association generally provides dustbins or paladin bins for such purposes, if not the Local Authority.

Remember:

- If rubbish is not placed in the containers provided, not only will the area around your home look untidy but it will quickly become a health hazard for you and your neighbours.
- If you have large or bulky items to dispose of, take them to your local tip. Some councils provide a free or reasonably priced special collection service. Just ring your council direct to ask. If you have any problems disposing of large items, contact your Area Housing Office.

Living in your home

Insurance

The Association's insurance policy only covers the structure of your home, so it is important for you to arrange adequate insurance to cover your own belongings and contents. Your own insurance should provide cover for your belongings in the event of fire, flood, burglary, accidental damage, theft etc, even if damage is caused by the failure of one of the Association's fixtures or appliances.

Your local Housing Office will be happy to give you further advice on insurance matters

Condensation

The difference between condensation and damp is usually quite easy to see. Damp patches will look wet and generally have a watermark around the edges. White salts are also likely to appear at the edge marking the extent of the damp. All Western Challenge properties have cavity-insulated walls and damp-proof membranes in the floor which stops damp ingress. The most usual cause of water in walls or floors is leaking pipework. Your Maintenance Officer can test for this very easily with a damp meter.

Condensation on the other hand becomes apparent when black mould begins to grow on the surface of walls. This is the most usual cause of what people call "damp" in their home. It occurs when moist air meets a cold surface. The most common place being on glass and around windows where a cold bridge is formed across the cavity by the lintel. It also occurs behind furniture and in cupboards where there is no air movement.

Some suggestions to limit condensation:

1. Try to reduce the amount of water in the air by drying clothes outside if possible. If it has to be done indoors, please keep a window open.
2. When cooking, as far as possible keep lids on saucepans and turn the heat down when they are boiling.
3. Run the cold water before the hot water when having a bath.
4. After having a bath keep the bathroom door closed and the window open so that the steam can escape directly without getting into other rooms.
5. Try to make sure there is sufficient heat in your room so that there are no cold spots.
6. Try to make sure that there is some ventilation in your room. Ventilation is the single most important thing needed to reduce the build up of moisture in your home. This will reduce condensation and give a healthier atmosphere in which to live. This is especially helpful for anyone who suffers from asthma.
7. Paraffin and liquid gas stoves should not be used as they give off a lot of water while they burn and can contribute seriously to condensation problems. They are also a fire hazard.

Further information is available from our Helpline – call 0800 783 7837

Heating and fuel costs

Sometimes condensation results when heating is not fully used because there is difficulty in meeting fuel costs. There are ways to spread payments so that you do not have to face a large bill every three months. These include:

- **Saving stamps** - the local gas and electricity companies sell saving stamps at

their showrooms. You can use the stamps to pay your bill.

- **Budget accounts** - the local gas and electricity companies should have a budget scheme. They work out your average yearly bill and divide it into twelve equal amounts. You pay this sum into a bank, post office, or at the showroom every month.
- **Paying weekly** - the electricity company will give you a book of payment forms. You can pay in advance as much as you like at the showroom or through a bank. The amount you pay will be put towards your next bill and you will only have to pay the difference.
- **Paying for gas central heating fortnightly** - If you have gas central heating you may be able to pay using fortnightly payment vouchers. The gas company works out your bill for the year and sends you a voucher each fortnight to pay at a bank, post office or gas showroom. Every three months you will get a statement so that you can see if you are paying too much or too little, and adjust the amounts.

If you receive a gas or electricity bill that you cannot afford to pay you are strongly advised to contact the gas or electricity company **immediately**. If you arrange to pay off the amount in regular instalments your supply will not be cut off. For further advice please contact the Association, or the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Frost precautions/burst pipes

Pipes will burst if they are allowed to freeze up in wintry conditions. During cold weather you should take the following precautions:

- Ensure that pipes are sufficiently lagged.
- Make sure that the temperature inside the house is not allowed to fall below freezing.
- Ensure that no taps are left running; that there are no leaks or overflows; and keep the plugs in the bath, sink and wash-hand basin.
- If your pipes freeze please report this to the Association, who can advise you what to do.

If you are leaving your home empty for long periods:

- Turn off your stop tap. Drain the water out of your cistern and tanks by turning all the taps on. Remember to turn the taps off afterwards.
- Flush WCs to empty the cisterns and place salt in the lavatory pan.
- If your home has radiators please ask for advice on draining these completely.

On returning home ensure that water is again circulating in your radiators before turning on the central heating boiler.

Home safety

Fire precautions

There are many precautions you can take to prevent a fire.

1. **Electrical** - Do no overload sockets. Ensure plugs are correctly wired and check all flexes from time to time.
2. **Fires** - Make sure all fires are guarded. Almost half the fires in the home are caused by direct contact with an unguarded fire.
3. **Materials** - Flame resistant materials give added protection. Loose fitting clothing can be hazardous when trailing near fires.

4. **Children** - Never allow children near unguarded fires and ensure that they do not play with matches or lighters.
5. **Cigarettes** - Ensure that all cigarettes are properly extinguished, particularly when retiring to bed.
6. **Doors** - Close all doors at night and never wedge open fire doors.
7. **Cooking** - Fat which is left unattended on a cooker can spontaneously ignite. Such fires can burn furiously and quickly cause a lot of smoke. Never try to move the cooking pan: take a damp cloth which has been well wrung out and carefully place it over the top of the burning pan. This will smother the flames.
8. **In case of fire**
 - a) Make sure everyone has left the house.
 - b) Close doors and windows - if you can - to prevent the spread of fire.
 - c) Call the Fire Service at once (telephone 999)
9. **Following fire damage** - Please notify the Association as soon as possible so that we can arrange for any necessary repairs and notify our insurers.
10. **Decorations and your own belongings** - These are your own responsibility, and you are strongly advised to arrange a household insurance policy.

Smoke Detectors

Smoke detectors are installed in all the Association's properties.

Please ensure that your smoke detector is working at all times - it could save your life.

All smoke detectors have a test button which, when pressed, should make the alarm sound for a second or two. Please test the alarm regularly. If it does not sound when pressed please follow these guidelines:

- Unclip the plastic cover. If there is a battery inside you should replace it with a new one, and re-test the alarm. If it still does not work please ring the Call Centre and we will arrange to have the detector replaced.
- If there is no battery inside the detector it is probably a newer type which runs directly from the mains electricity. Normally these detectors make a regular beep to warn that the battery is running low, or that mains power has been lost. In this case please ring the Call Centre and we will arrange to repair or replace it.

The detector should be cleaned once a year to remove dust which builds up and makes it over-sensitive, (this is best done with a vacuum cleaner).

CO Detector

Some homes, (usually older properties), are fitted with a carbon monoxide detector. This is a square white box with a red light which flashes approximately once every minute. It will be sited on the wall in the same room as a gas appliance, usually a boiler or gas fire, or an open fire.

The detector is checked each year at the same time as your boiler is serviced, but please check it yourself regularly by pressing the test button. If the alarm does not sound please ring the Call Centre and we will replace it.

You can't see or smell carbon monoxide, but it can kill. If you hear the alarm please take the following action immediately:

- Open all doors and windows to ventilate the area and allow the carbon monoxide to disperse.
- Where possible turn off all gas or fuelled appliances and stop using them.

- Evacuate the property leaving the doors and windows open.
- Ring your gas supplier or the call centre on 0800 7837837 and explain the problem. Keep the telephone number in a prominent place.
- Do not re-enter the property until the alarm has stopped.

Gas safety

Make sure you know how to turn off the gas in an emergency. If you smell gas, put out cigarettes and do not use a match or naked flame. Do not switch on any lights or use any other electrical appliances. Open doors and windows and check to see if there is a gas tap left on or a pilot light blown out. If you think there is a leak, turn off the gas at the metre and call the Gas Company straight away. The emergency telephone number for TRANSCO is **0800 111999**.

Electrical safety

1. Never take an electrical appliance into the bathroom.
2. Do not trail wires under a carpet as these will eventually wear and could cause a fire.
3. Do not plug electrical appliances into light sockets.
4. Do no overload sockets.
5. Ensure that your hands are dry when touching switches or live appliances.

Asbestos

A specialist asbestos consultant has undertaken a sample survey of the Association's properties. The survey was designed to highlight any asbestos containing materials that may be disturbed during maintenance or refurbishment works, or during the day-to-day activities of the occupiers. If your home was found to contain asbestos, a letter is included giving further details.

As this was a sample survey not every property on a scheme will have been inspected, although we did target those that were built while asbestos was still being used. If you discover a material that you think may contain asbestos please contact our free phone number so that we can have it analysed.

It must be assumed that if asbestos is identified in a material in one room/area it is present in similar material elsewhere in the property. For example, if the vinyl floor tiles in the kitchen have been identified as containing asbestos it must be assumed that all the vinyl floor tiles in the property contain asbestos and must be treated in the same way, left undisturbed.

IMPORTANT - Asbestos was used in artex until the early nineties. We advise that if your property was built before 1995 and you have artex surfaces (usually ceilings) you should assume that they contain asbestos. If this is the case our advice is simply that you do not drill, rub down or work on these surfaces. If you do require any maintenance works to these surfaces please contact our free phone number 0800 783 7837.

