

Repairs Handbook

Advice on caring for your home



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This information is correct at the time of publishing (September 2019). To get an up-to-date version of this guide please go to

www.reading.gov.uk/rbctenantrepairs

This handbook has been written to help you report and describe your repairs to our staff. If you need any part of this handbook in large print, braille or explained in your own language please contact Tenant Services on 0118 9372161.

لقد تمت كتابة هذا الكتيب لمساعدتك في الإبلاغ ووصف أعمال التصليحات التي ترغب بالقيام بها إلى موظفينا. وإذا كنت ترغب بالحصول على أي جزء من أجزاء هذا الكتيب مطبوعة بالخط الكبير أو بلغة برايل أو مترجمة إلى لغتك الأم ، فيرجى منك الاتصال مع الخدمات الإسكانية على رقم الهاتف: 0118 9372161.

हमारे स्टाफ़ को अपनी समस्या की जरूरतों के बारे में सूचित करने और उन कार्यों का वर्णन देने में आपकी मदद करने के लिए इस पुस्तिका को लिखा गया है। अगर आपको इस पुस्तिका का कोई भी अंश बड़े अक्षरों, ब्रेल अपनी भाषा में वर्णित चाहिए तो कृपया 0118 9372161 पर आवासन सेवाओं से संपर्क करें।

ਇਹ ਪੁਸਤਿਕਾ ਸਾਡੇ ਸਟਾਫ਼ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਮੁਰੰਮਤਾਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਦੱਸਣ ਅਤੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦਾ ਵਿਵਰਣ ਦੇਣ ਲਈ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਲਿਖੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਪੁਸਤਿਕਾ ਦੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਦੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ, ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੇਖਤ ਹੈ ਜਾਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਸ ਦਾ ਵਿਵਰਣ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਸਰਵਿਸਿਜ਼ (ਘਰੇਲੂ ਸੇਵਾਵਾਂ) ਨਾਲ 0118 9372161 'ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

یہ دستی کتاب اس لئے لکھی گئی ہے کہ آپ کو ہمارے عملے کو اپنی مرمتوں کی اطلاع دینے اور بیان کرنے میں مدد مل سکے۔ اگر آپ کو اس دستی کتاب کا کوئی حصہ بڑے الفاظ، بریل میں چاہیے یا اگر آپ چاہتے ہیں کہ اس کی وضاحت آپ کی اپنی زبان میں کی جائے تو براہ مہربانی 0118 9372161 پر ہاؤسنگ سروسز سے رابطہ کریں۔

FOREWORD FROM THE TENANT ACTION TEAM

This Handbook has been produced by Reading Borough Council Repairs team in collaboration with a team of involved tenants from the Tenant Participation Panel. The handbook comes complete with diagrams to make it easier for you to report and describe your repairs to the call centre, ensuring the most efficient response.

The Handbook also explains which repairs you are responsible for as a tenant and which are Reading Borough Councils responsibility.

We hope you find this handbook helpful.

A special thank you to former tenants involved in producing this guide including Maggie and Chris.

The Tenant Participation Team support and train tenants like yourself to help Housing make better decisions and choices. If you would like to get involved please contact the Tenant Participation Team on 0118 9372730 or email Tenant.Participation@reading.gov.uk to discuss your interests and how you can get involved

Warning - Check Identity Cards

Before you let anyone into your home to carry out a repair, inspection or gas service, you should check their identity card carefully or you can ask to see the work order on their mobile device to check that it instructs them to do the repair or servicing you are expecting. If you are at all unsure, ask them to wait outside and phone us.

Help - Contact Information

Have we got your correct contact information? It is very difficult to keep you updated with progress on your repairs if the contact information we hold for you is not correct.

WHAT TO DO IN A SERIOUS EMERGENCY

Fire

- Get out, stay out and call 999
- If you live in a flat or sheltered housing check your noticeboard for evacuation procedures
- Don't go back into a fire
- Warn your neighbours if any might be in danger

Water - burst or leaking pipe

- Turn the water off at the main stopcock
- If the electrics are affected, turn off the electricity at the fuse box assuming it is not affected

Call our repairs services (see useful information page - page 6)

Electricity - loss of power

- If your neighbours are also affected call your electricity company and check if it's a blackout. The telephone number to call is 105 or use this link:
<http://www.powercut105.com/>
- If it is just your home, check that you have credit on your meter (if on pre-pay).
- Finally check our advice on page 25.
- If the problem persists after following the advice call our repairs service (see useful information page - page 6)


Gas - if you smell gas

- Do not turn on/off any electrical switches.
- Extinguish all naked flames, do not smoke, strike matches or do anything which could cause an ignition.
- Open all doors and windows to ventilate the property.
- Check to see if the gas has been left on unlit on any appliance or a pilot light has gone out. If so turn off the appliance and do not relight until the smell of gas has left the property.
- If you still smell gas, think you have a gas leak or are worried that fumes containing carbon monoxide are escaping from a gas appliance turn off the gas at your gas meter and call the free Gas Emergency Services line immediately on 0800 111 999.

USEFUL INFORMATION

In this handbook you will find information and advice relating to the stopcocks, fuse boxes and meters in your home. It is a good idea to **fill in the boxes below** with the details of where to find these. Knowing where these are could be important if there is an emergency in your home.

Where is it in your home?

Important equipment	Where is it?		
Gas Supply Tap:			
Electric consumer unit (Fuse Box):			
Mains water stopcock: (first entry point for water into your home)			
Cold water storage tank: (if you have one)			
Hot water tank (cylinder):			
Central heating boiler:			
	Boiler Make:		
	Boiler Model:		
	Where is it?	Move in reading:	Date:
Water meter:			
Gas meter:			
Electricity meter:			

Where do I request repairs from?

Online:	Council Home Repair Request
Phone:	Freephone 0800 318 296 or 0118 9373757 option 1 For Out-of-Hours Emergencies only: 0118 937 3737
Email:	Webform@reading.gov.uk
Text Phone:	81722
Postal Address:	Council House Repairs Reading Borough Council Civic Offices Bridge Street Reading RG1 2LU

LOOKING AFTER YOUR HOME

The responsibility for looking after your home is shared between you and the Council. This following information summarises who is responsible for what. If you do not meet your repair responsibilities we will do the work and recharge our costs to you. A quick guide to help you is detailed at [Repair Responsibilities](#). If you do not see what you are looking for and are not sure who should do it, then just ask.

The council's repair responsibilities

Our repair responsibility is defined in your tenancy agreement. We are generally responsible for repairing and maintaining the services, structure and external fabric of the property and any shared parts of the building which the property is part of.

We aim to complete most work within 15 working days. However if it is a health and safety issue, or your heating/hot water or electrical supply is not working properly this will normally be done within 2 working days, or within 3 hours if it is an emergency. Where emergencies occur our priority is to make the problem safe and provide you with temporary facilities if required. The following day we will book an appointment with you to fully fix the problem unless we were able to resolve it there and then.

How we look after your home

We make sure your home is kept in good repair and proper working order by:

- Carrying out routine (planned) maintenance (such as painting external woodwork or servicing your boiler) to keep your property in good condition and prevent breakdowns.
- Improving your home by replacing fixtures and fittings (such as windows) when they are at the end of their useful life.
- Providing a responsive repairs service to repair problems that are the Council's responsibility.
- Providing an out-of-hours emergency call out service to make your property safe and secure if there is an immediate and serious risk to life or property.

Helping us to help you

You can help us provide a good service by:

- Reporting repairs to us as soon as possible.
- Being at home at the time of any agreed appointment or letting us know in advance if you need to change an appointment.
- Not using the out-of-hours emergency service for anything other than genuine emergencies - if you do we will charge you a call out fee (min £97.02 plus VAT) PLUS the cost of the work if the repair is your responsibility.

Letting us into your home

Your Tenancy Agreement says you MUST allow us into your home (with reasonable notice) to:

- Inspect the condition of your home
- Carry out repairs/improvements to your home or the adjoining property
- Complete the annual gas safety checks we are required to carry out by law.

We can force entry* into your home without notice if:

- There is an immediate risk of personal injury or damage to your home/adjoining property or
- We haven't been able to carry out an overdue gas safety check.

* Please note you will have to pay for any repairs caused by this.

Your repair responsibilities

You are responsible for:

- Keeping your home clean (including garages or outbuildings)
- Painting & decorating inside your home
- Keeping your garden well maintained and free from rubbish
- Organising and paying for damage caused deliberately, accidentally, through your neglect or by forced entry by the police
- Keeping communal areas clear of rubbish and all belongings
- Maintaining your own equipment and paying for any damage caused if they go wrong
- Organising and paying for minor work to your home such as:

Replacing light bulbs

Fixing letterbox plates

Replacing broken window glass

Repairs to internal doors

Filling small cracks in plaster

Replacing floor, wall & fireplace tiles

Maintaining your own floor coverings

Putting up your own curtain rails

Testing your smoke detector weekly

Putting up your own curtains etc.

Sweeping your chimney (if you have one)

Replacing damaged wall sockets

Replacing plugs/chains in sinks & baths

Unblocking sinks/basins, gullies and drains

Maintaining your own washing line

Maintaining your TV aerial

Getting rid of pests (wasps, rats or ants etc.)

If you don't do this work we can/may do it for you and recharge our costs to you. We won't usually start until you have paid at least 15% of our estimated cost up front.

If you are locked out

You MUST arrange and pay for the help you need to regain entry to your home if you lock yourself out or your keys are lost or stolen. We will only help you gain entry/change locks if you agree to pay for the work and pay at least 15% of the cost up front.

If you are older or disabled

We may be able to help you meet your repair responsibilities - ask your Housing Officer.

Housing Repairs	Freephone - 0800 318 296		
	Mobiles - 0118 937 3757		
	Out-of-hours emergencies - 0118 937 3737		
Tenant Services	0118 937 2161	Housing Complaints	0118 937 3787

REPAIR RESPONSIBILITIES

	Council	Tenant
WINDOWS		
Sills	✓	
Glass (where caused by criminal damage-Crime Ref. No. given)	✓	
Frame	✓	
Catches and other window furniture	✓	✓
DOORS		
Internal doors and ironmongery		✓
External doors and ironmongery (wear and tear only)	✓	
Door Entry Systems	✓	
Draught Excluders	✓	
Door chains and spyholes (if fitted by the Council)	✓	✓
WALLS		
Minor plastering (cracks and small holes)		✓
Decorating		✓
Wall tiles(if put up by the Council)	✓	
External walls and rendering	✓	
Foundations	✓	
Pointing	✓	
FLOORS		
Concrete floors	✓	
Floor tiles (if fitted by the Council)	✓	
Loose floor coverings and carpets incl. wood laminate		✓
Floorboards and joists	✓	
Skirting boards and architraves	✓	
CEILINGS		
Decoration (including patching artex)		✓
STAIRS		
Staircase, bannisters, handrail	✓	
BATHROOM		
Bath panels	✓	
Bath, Wash hand basin (wear and tear only)	✓	
KITCHEN		
Cupboards (wear and tear only)	✓	
Drawers (wear and tear only)	✓	
Worktops (wear and tear only)	✓	

	Council	Tenant
ELECTRICAL		
Wiring, sockets, and light fittings (only if fitted by the Council)	✓	
Smoke alarms (wired or battery operated)	✓	
Pull cord string		✓
Fuse box (Consumer unit)	✓	
Storage heater (only if fitted by the Council)	✓	
Fires (only if fitted by the Council)	✓	
Electric meter and supply	✓	
Cookers and hobs (unless owned by the Council)		✓
Disconnection/reconnection of fittings (unless owned by the Council)		✓
Extractor fans	✓	
Immersion heaters	✓	
Security lights	✓	✓
PLUMBING		
Hot and cold services, tanks and overflows	✓	
Blocked wc or sinks, and baths	✓	✓
All taps, stop taps and valves	✓	
WC pans	✓	
WC cisterns	✓	
Showers and trays (if fitted by the Council)	✓	
WC seats	✓	
Shower curtains		✓
Plugs and chains to sinks and wash hand basins+		✓
Tap washers	✓	
Lagging of tanks and pipework	✓	
Sealant around bath, wash hand basin, and sink	✓	
GAS		
Pipe work	✓	
Gas meter and supply	✓	
Gas fire (only if owned by Council)	✓	
Radiators, valves, time clocks, thermostats	✓	
Boilers	✓	
Cooker (only if owned by the Council)	✓	

	Council	Tenant
ROOF		
Chimney	✓	
Roof including tiles/slates etc	✓	
Guttering and rainwater pipes	✓	
Fascia boards, soffits, and barge boards	✓	
DRAINS AND PIPES		
Soil pipes and fittings	✓	
Drain pipes and gulleys	✓	✓
Blocked drains	✓	
Inspection chambers	✓	
GARDENS AND BOUNDARIES		
Gardens		✓
Fencing (unless fitted by the Council)	✓	✓
Gates (unless fitted by the Council)	✓	✓
Line posts/dryers (unless fitted by the Council)	✓	✓
Paths, driveways, car hardstandings (only if fitted by the Council)	✓	
Garage, shed, outbuilding (unless owned by the Council)	✓	✓
Garage, shed, outbuilding locks		✓
GAINING ENTRY TO PROPERTY		
Due to lost keys or locking yourself out		✓
Police forced entry		✓
Damage due to a break-in (victim of crime - crime number required)	✓	

Priority	Description	Target Time	Notes
1	Emergency	3 Hours	We use this when there is an immediate and serious risk to you and/or the property. We will make safe and secure only.
2	Urgent	2 Working Days	We use this where a serious risk to you and/or your home is likely to develop if action is not taken quickly.
3	Routine	15 Working Days	We use this where there is a low risk to you or your home. This is the standard priority of most work we do.
4	Extended	40 Working Days	We use this where an item must be ordered or made to measure in order to complete the works - usually items like doors or windows.
6	Out-of-Hours	3 Hours	We use this when there is an immediate and serious risk to you and/or the property outside normal hours. We make safe & secure only.

HOW TO REPORT A REPAIR

Contact us

During office hours - Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

Call FREE: 0800318296 OR visit www.reading.gov.uk/tenantrepairs and complete the on-line form

Other times - Monday to Friday 5pm-9am and any time at weekends/bank holidays

Call: 01189373737 **GENUINE EMERGENCIES ONLY**. If you use the emergency out of hours service for anything other than genuine emergencies (where there is serious risk to people or property) we will charge our costs to you

What we will do

We will ask you to:

- Provide us your name, address, e-mail address, mobile number and a daytime contact number
- Tell us what the problem is
- Agree a date and time slot (*8.00 am to 12 noon or 12 noon to 4.00 pm*) when someone will be home to let us in
- Tell us if you have mobility problems or any other special requirements such as being hard of hearing and need us to knock loudly, or you have difficulty getting to the door and need us to wait a little longer when we call. If your repair is an emergency (risk to health or safety of you or others) always contact us by phone.

We will send you:

- A letter confirming your repair request and appointment (except for emergencies), and a customer satisfaction form for you to complete when the work is done

We will advise you:

- If a repair inspection is needed before we do any work

If it is an emergency we will:

- Make your property safe and secure
- Contact you on the next working day to arrange for a full repair to be carried out within normal timescales

After the repair is reported

- After the repair has been reported we will:
- Keep you informed about the progress of the job
- If you have an appointment and provided us with a telephone number we will remind you about it the day before, and send you a further message when our tradesperson is on their way
- Provide you with a customer satisfaction form (either electronically or on paper) for you to complete after the work has been finished.

We ask that you

- Contact us promptly if an appointment becomes inconvenient to you and you need to change it.
- Ensure we can gain access to the location of the repair and, if necessary, protect any furniture or floor coverings as required. Please let us know when you report the repair if you have any difficulties arranging this.

When the trades person arrives

- Before you let anyone into your home, please check their identification badge. If in doubt, please ring the Freephone number and check before allowing access.
- If you are not at home on an agreed appointment date, a 'no access card' will be posted through your door. It is your responsibility to arrange another appointment if you still require a repair to be completed. We will still attempt to gain access if you are not available for your gas service, as we are legally obliged to complete this within 12 months of the last service.
- Please ensure our operatives can access the location of the repair. If you have children or pets it is your responsibility to keep them away from the work location. Our operatives can refuse to work at your home if they feel their health or safety is at risk.

Vandalism and neglect

We are not responsible for repairs caused as a result of damage or neglect by you, your family, your visitors or your pets, including any accidental damage or any alterations you may have made. In some circumstances, if you damage your home we will consider that you have broken your tenancy agreement. If you cause serious damage, you risk losing your home.

If we have to carry out any repairs caused by you, we will charge you for the full cost of the work including our administrative costs.

If damage has been caused to your home by criminal action you must report this to the police so that they can investigate the matter. The Police will give you a crime number, which you must give to us so that we can carry out any repairs needed.

DIAGNOSTICS

BASINS AND SINKS

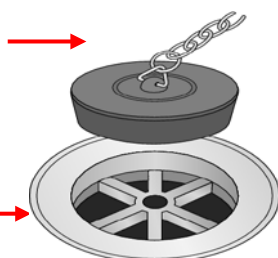
When you report a repair we need to know:

- What is the problem; for example, are the taps loose, leaking or dripping?
- Where is the problem; if it's a blockage is it in the bathroom sink or the kitchen basin.
- What type of taps do you have; do you have a mixer tap or a pillar tap?
- Which tap is the problem; is it the hot or cold tap?
- Have you tried to resolve the issue; if it is a blockage, have you tried to use any drain cleaner solution on it?
- Has the issue caused other damage; if the taps are leaking are they damaging the rest of your home?



A grey deposit may build up around your taps and plug holes - this is called lime scale. You can remove it with lemon juice or lime scale remover.

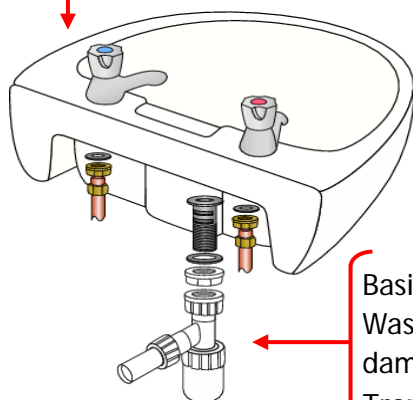
Plug and chain is damaged or missing



Waste grid is damaged or missing

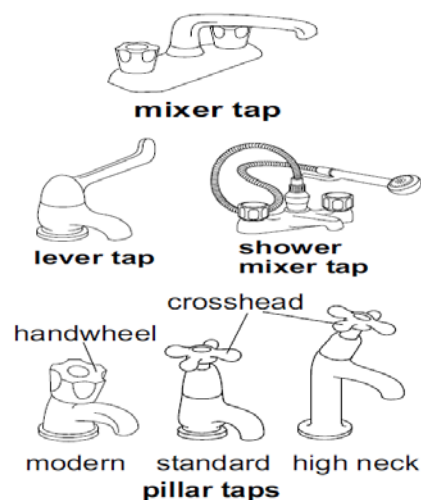


Tap is dripping
Tap is loose
Tap will not turn on or off
Chrome plated tap is damaged beyond repair



Basin is blocked
Waste pipe is damaged
Trap is damaged

Tap types

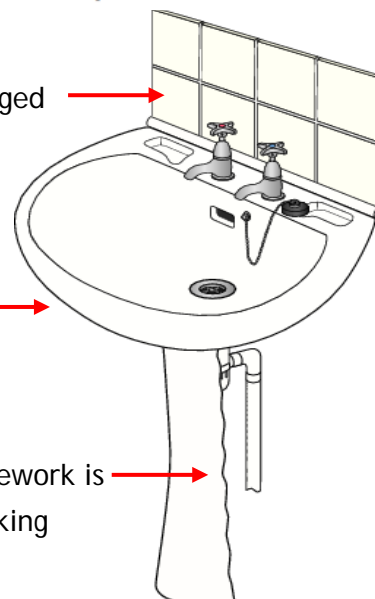


Tiling is damaged



Basin is loose
Basin is damaged beyond repair

Pipework is leaking



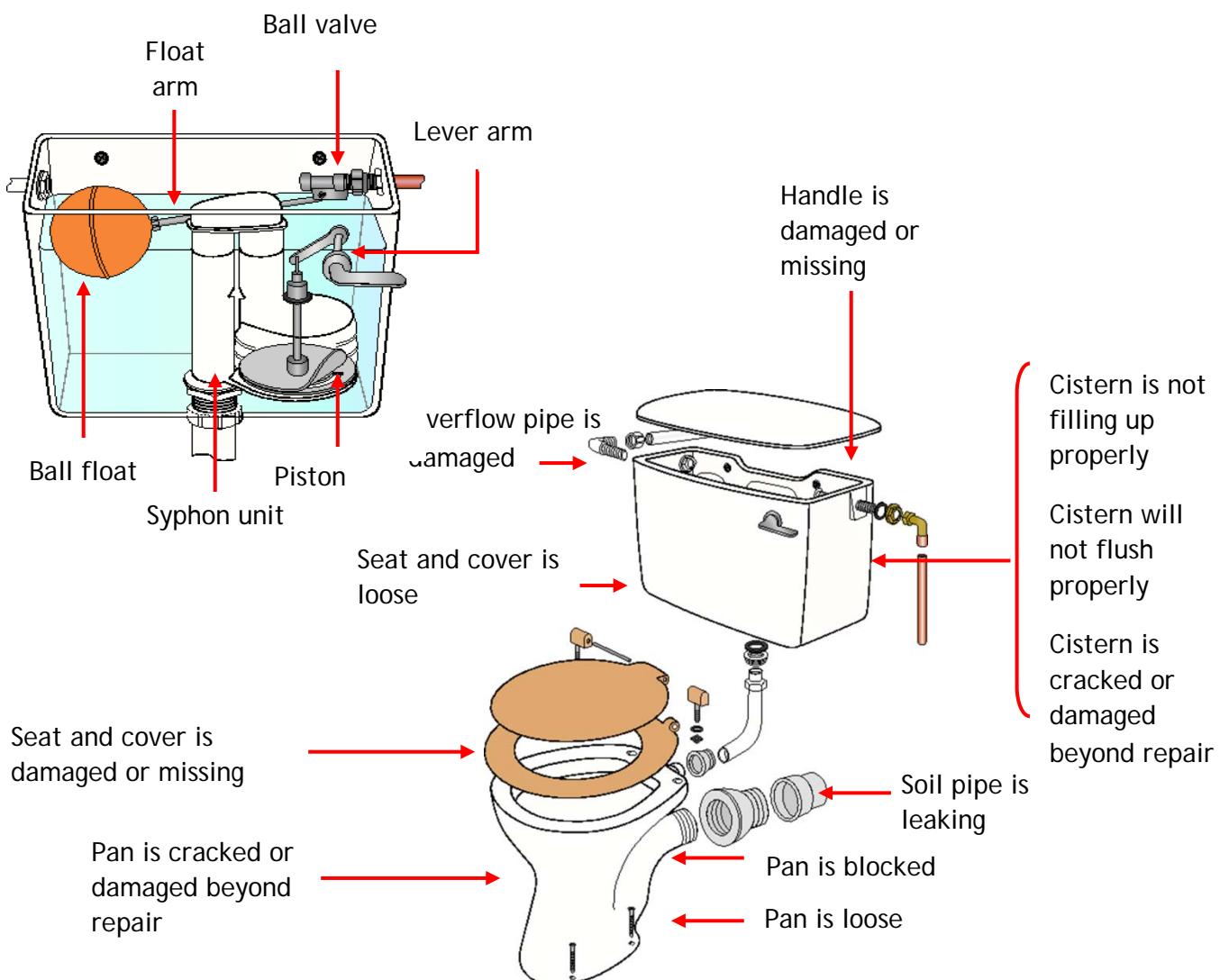
TOILETS, CISTERNS, AND FITTINGS

When you report a repair we need to know:

- **What is the problem?** A leak; toilet won't flush; toilet is blocked, or something else?
- **Where is the problem?** If it is a leak, can you see where it is leaking from? Is the Pan cracked? Are any pipes or joints leaking? Does it only leak when you flush it?
- **Is it damaged?** If so, how did the damage occur
- **Do you have another toilet to use?**

Handy
Tips

If your overflow is running, you can stop it temporarily by tying the float in the up position using string or wire and a piece of wood across the top of the cistern



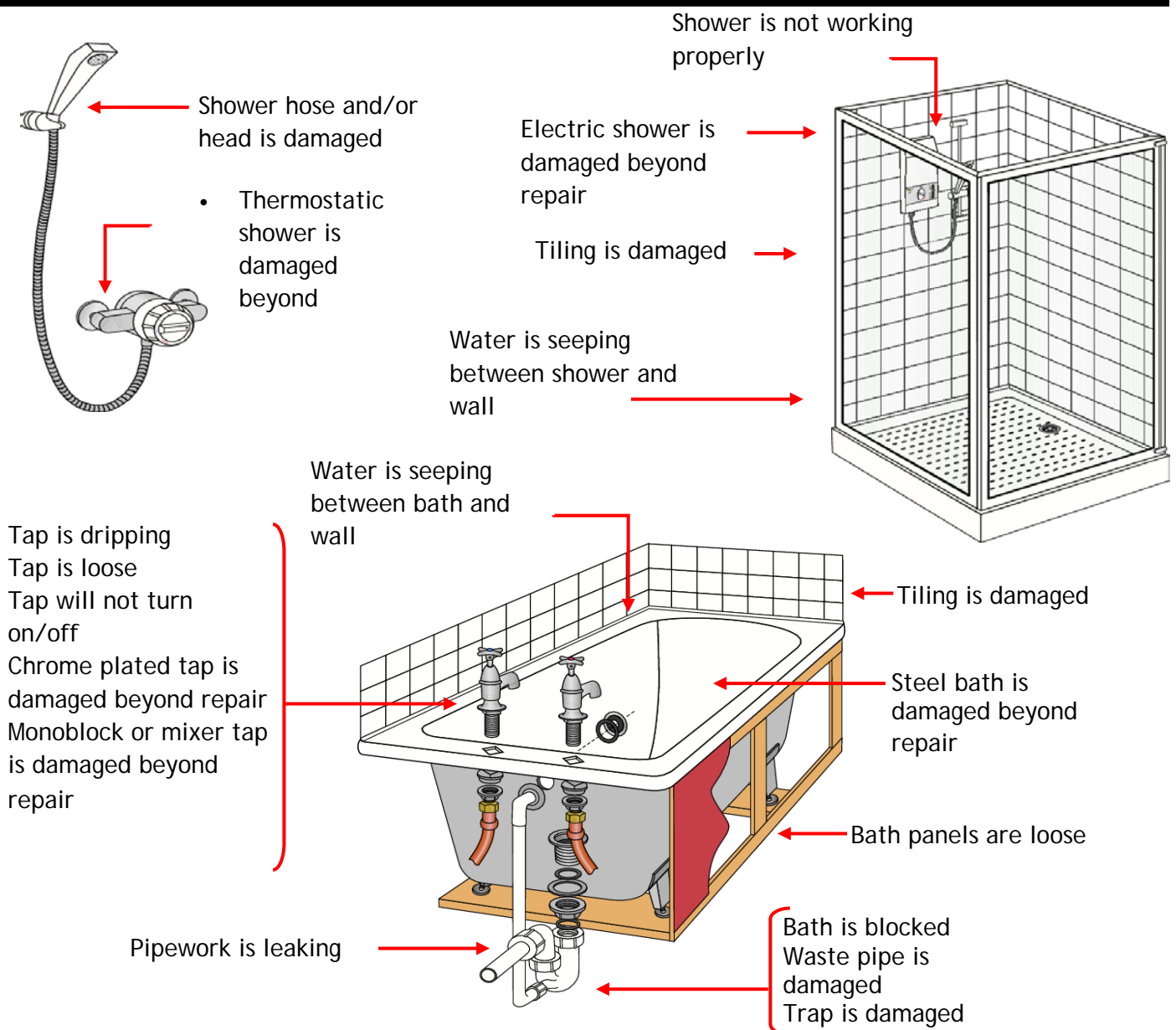
BATHS AND SHOWERS

When you report a repair we need to know:

- **What is the problem?** Is a tap or the shower dripping? Is the water pressure low? Is the waste blocked? Or something else?
- **Is the shower - an electric or mixer tap? Over the bath or standalone?** (if you installed the shower yourself it is your responsibility)
- **Is the bath stainless steel or plastic**
- **Is it damaged?** If so, how did the damage occur?

Handy
Tips

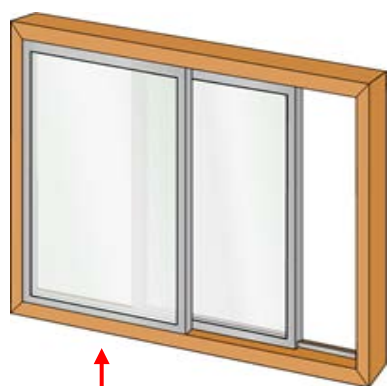
If possible please do not use the shower or bath until a repair has been done in order to avoid any further damage



DOORS, LOCKS, LATCHES, AND HINGES

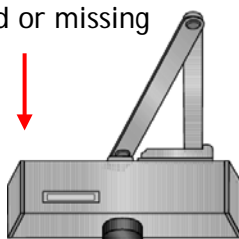
When you report a repair we need to know:

- Which door is affected? (Outside, or internal door and what room)
- If it is an outside door:
 - Can you see any reason for this? (i.e. warping (bending))
 - Has the door been recently painted?
- What type of door is it? Wooden or plastic?
- If it is a lock, which lock is it, and does the affected door have a 2nd lock?
 ((If you have lost or broken your key, you will be recharged for us to force entry and change the lock))

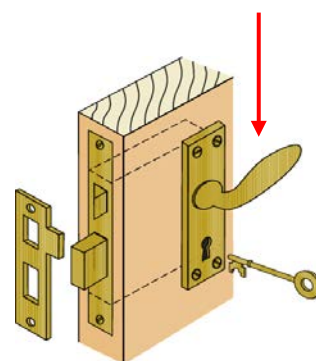


PVCu patio door will not close properly

Overhead door closer is damaged or missing



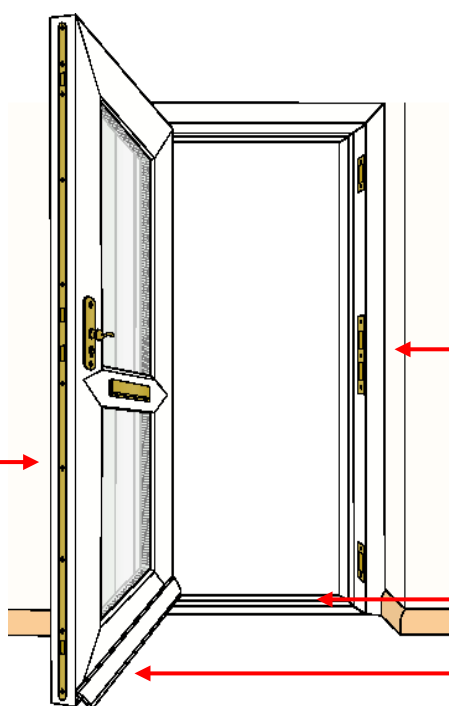
Door latch is damaged or missing



Timber/PVCu door will not open or close properly

Door needs minor repairs

Hardwood/Softwood door is damaged beyond repair



Draught around door frame

Mastic around door frame is damaged

Metal/PVCu door frame is loose

Timber frame is loose/damaged

Door stop is damaged

Threshold is damaged

Weatherboard is damaged or missing

ELECTRICS

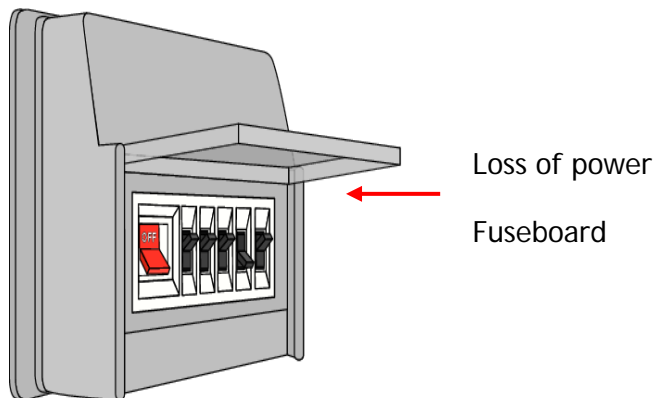
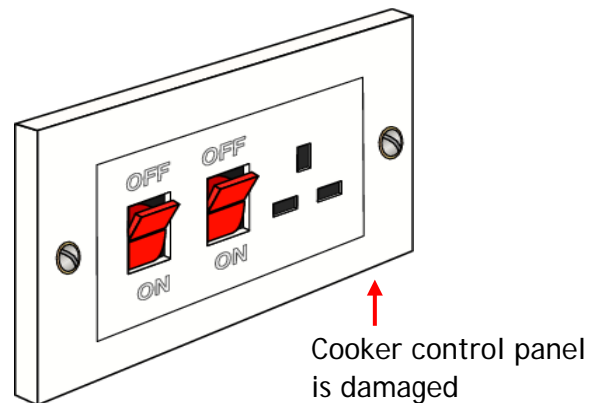
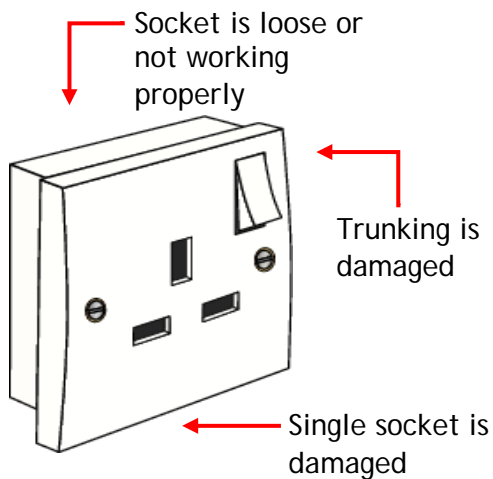
Mains voltage electricity can be very dangerous. Please tell us about any problems with flickering lights or over-heating sockets as soon as you can.

When you report a repair we need to know:

- Have you got a card meter? If so, have you run out of credit?
- What is the problem (sockets, lights, cooker control panel, etc)?
- Does it only affect one room, if so, which one?
- If it is a light, have you checked the bulb
- Were you using one particular appliance if there is a power failure?

Handy
Tips

Check our advice section on Electrics (see page 25)



INTERIOR WALLS, STAIRS, AND CEILINGS

When you report a repair we need to know:

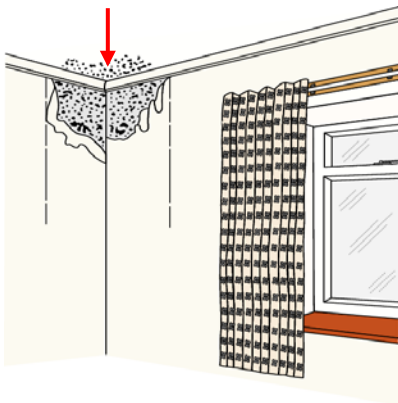
Damp/Mould/Condensation

- Where is the problem? i.e. is it above or below a window, on the ceiling, at ground level?
- Do you have a problem with condensation(water on the inside of your windows)

Floors/Stairs

- Where is the problem?
- How big an area is affected?
- Is it in your home or a communal area?
- If stairs, how many are affected? Are the stairs wooden or concrete?

Damp/Mould/Condensation



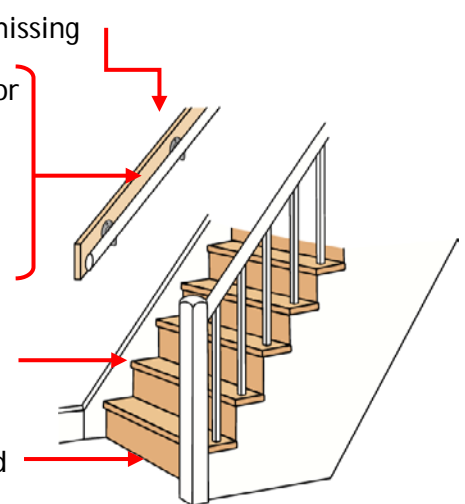
Handrail bracket is missing

Timber handrail or bracket is loose

Handrail is damaged

Tread is damaged

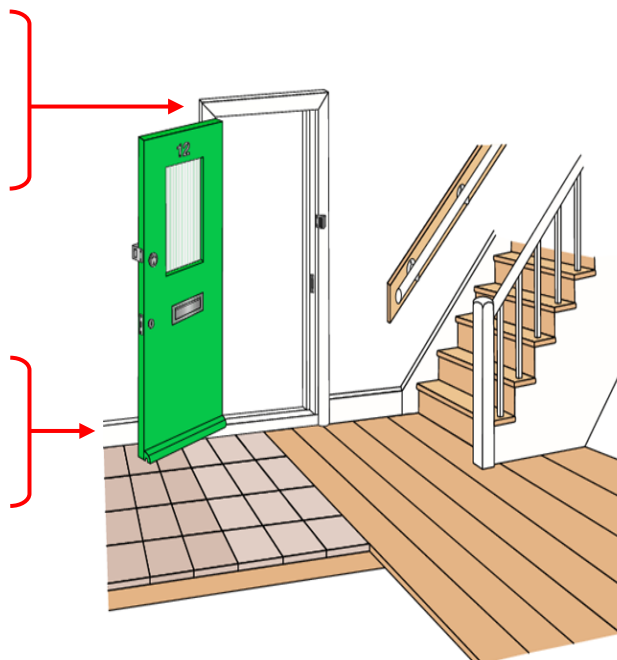
Riser is damaged



Architrave is loose

Architrave is damaged

Skirting board is loose
Skirting board is damaged



Floorboard is loose

Tongue & grooved flooring is loose

Chipboard flooring is damaged

Vinyl flooring is damaged

HEATING

When you report a repair we need to know:

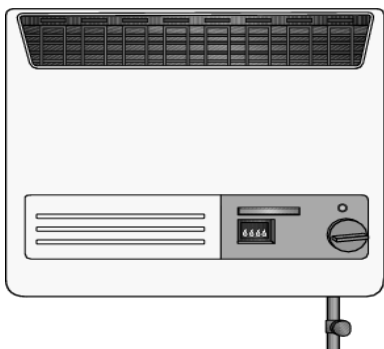
- Is it a full or partial loss of heating? If partial is it up or downstairs?
- Do you have storage heaters or radiators?
- Is your timer controls set to on?
- Do you have hot water?
- If you think the boiler is not working:
 - Is the power still on?
 - Has the pilot light gone out?

Handy
Tips

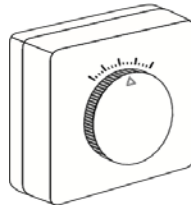
*If you have a radiator that is not heating up, it may be due to air in the system.
Try bleeding it, and maybe turn your room thermostat up*

Fan heater is not working properly

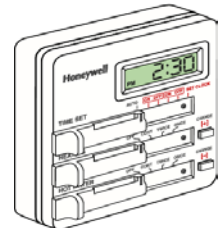
Fan heater is damaged beyond repair



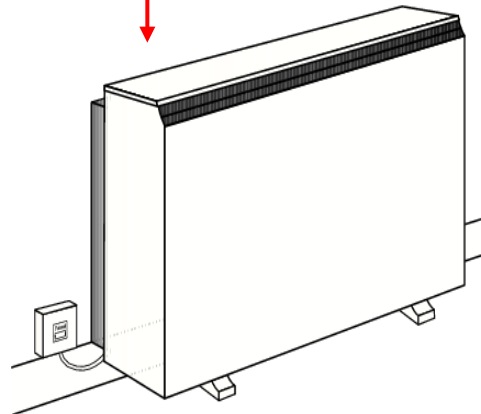
Heating thermostat is not working



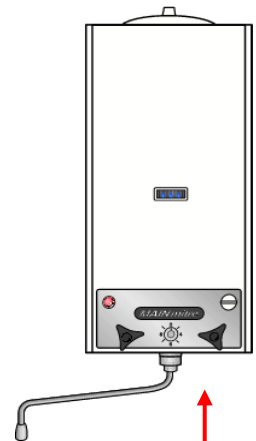
Boiler control or timeclock needs resetting



Night storage heater is not working



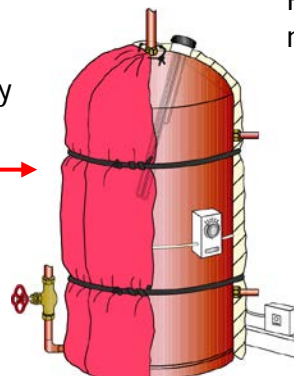
Water heater is not working properly



Hot water system is not working properly

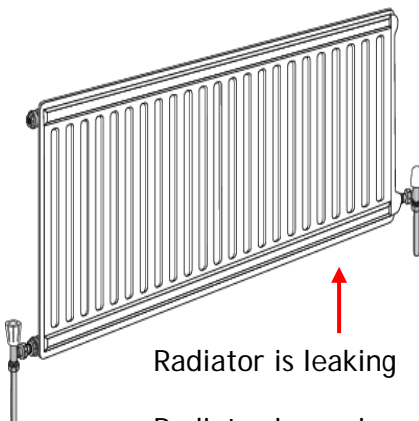
Immersion heater is not working properly

Cylinder needs renewing



Radiator is leaking

Radiator is coming away from wall



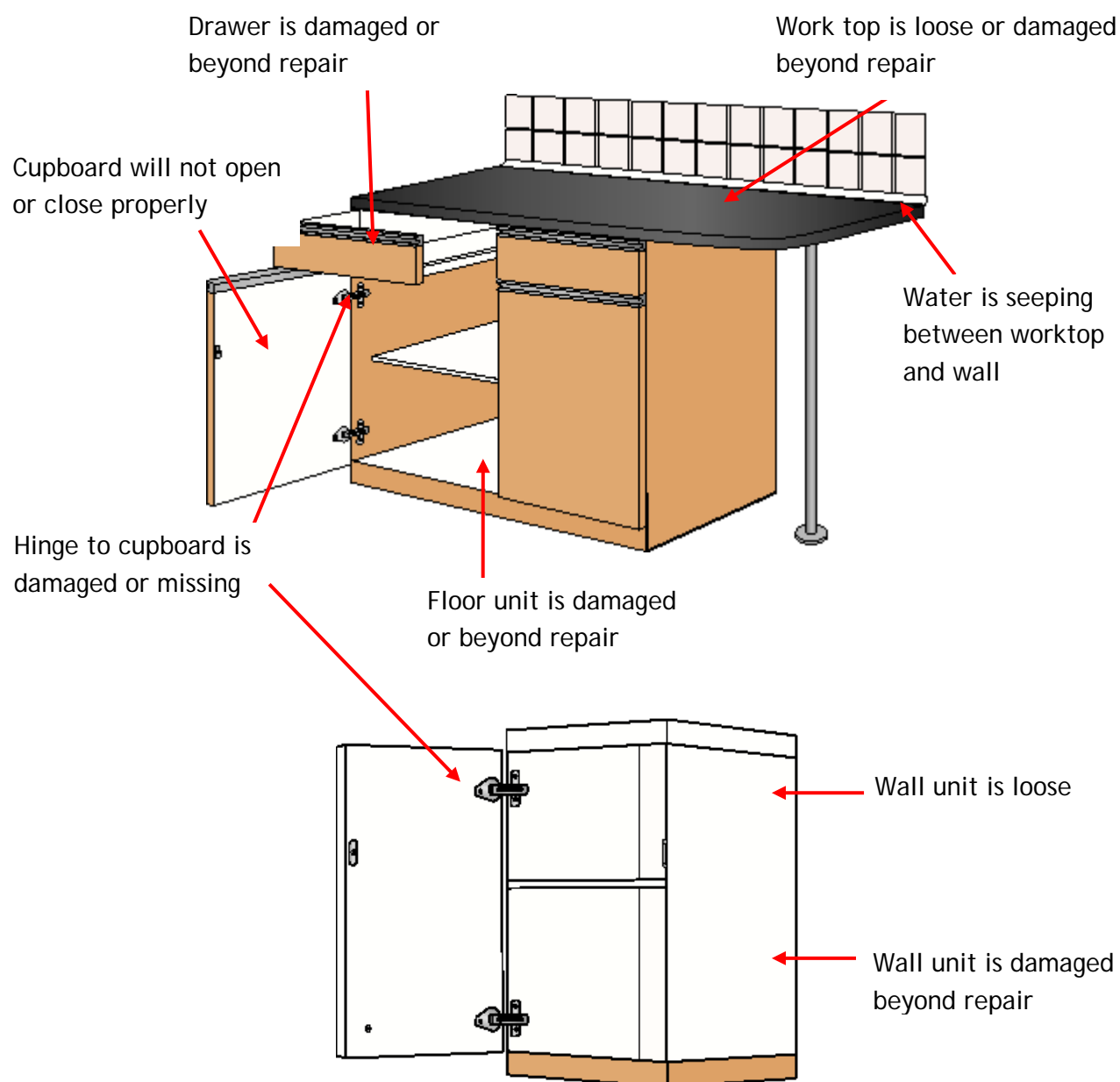
KITCHEN UNITS

When you tell us about problems with your kitchen units we need to know:

- How old your kitchen is
- Which part is damaged, and how did it happen?

If the problem is not fair wear and tear you will be recharged for any work needed to fix it

If we need to replace a work surface or kitchen unit an appointment will be made to measure up first.



ADVICE AND SUPPORT

Condensation problems

Condensation is the most common type of damp. There is always moisture in the air and when the air reaches cold surfaces (like your windows) tiny drops of water appear. It mostly appears during cold weather in places where there is little movement of air like corners of rooms, behind wardrobes and near windows. Continual exposure to moisture will cause mould to grow in these places.



There are a number of things that you can do to reduce or get rid of it.

Make less moisture

- **Wipe the water from your windows and sills with a cloth** - but make sure you wring your cloth out in the sink. Do not put the wet cloth on a heater to dry - the water then evaporates back into the air and re-appears as condensation when the temperature drops. Wipe the water off every time it appears to get rid of the excess moisture in your home.
- **Don't dry washing inside your home** - all the water from your clothes will go straight into the air and as soon as the air cools you will get condensation on your windows and walls.
- **Put lids on your saucepans when cooking** - this keeps steam in the pan and saves money on your fuel bill.
- **Don't use paraffin or bottled gas heaters** - they produce lots of moisture - burning one gallon of paraffin puts about one gallon of water vapour into the air which re-appears as condensation on your windows or other cold surfaces.
- **Vent your tumble dryer outside** - if your dryer is not self-condensing make sure you put the hose out of a window to ensure the hot moisture-filled air produced by the machine does not condense inside your home - opening a window is not enough. Hose kits are available from most electrical and DIY stores.

Increase the ventilation

- **Use the trickle ventilators or night vents in your windows.** You need a good air flow to help get rid of moisture which is produced in your home all the time. Modern windows have pull-down flaps to help ventilate your home - keep these open as much as possible so damp air can escape. Some windows have a night vent so the window can be locked with it open just 15 to 20 mm
- **Open a window when cooking and after showering/bathing.** Boiling pans, hot baths and showers produce lots of steam - opening a window ensures this steam condenses outside rather than inside your home. It also helps to keep your kitchen and bathroom doors shut when these rooms are in use and for about 20 minutes after to stop moist air getting into other rooms. When your kitchen, bathroom or other rooms are not in use, leave doors open so heat can spread evenly through your home.
- **Allow air to circulate where possible.** Avoid putting furniture against outside walls of your home. Inside walls (between rooms) are always warmer and are less prone to condensation. Leave a gap between the wall and the furniture so air can circulate and ensure that wardrobes and cupboards are properly ventilated to prevent mould growing inside them.



Keep your home warm

When moisture condenses on your walls it makes them colder. This causes you to lose heat and increases the risk of mould growing. It then takes more energy to heat your home to a comfortable temperature which costs more. Heating your home efficiently helps reduce condensation and could save money on your heating bills. It is important to keep your home above 18 °C (63°F) - most people find a comfortable heat is around 21°C (70°F). You will get condensation if you let your home fall below 18°C

Remove mould as soon as you find it

You **MUST** remove mould as soon as you find it to stop it spreading and causing more damage to your home. You can get special cleaning products from DIY stores (always follow the manufacturer's instructions) or use a good quality bleach (mix 1 part bleach to 4 parts water) but remember bleach may take the colour out.

Blocked waste

Waste pipes and traps always hold some water which stops air or foul smell coming up the drain. However, waste can build up and become stuck in it.

Blockages in basins and sinks are usually caused by the build-up of waste - fat, tea leaves, hair, and so on. You should clear waste pipes and traps at least once a month, with hot water or a cleaning product. Do not use caustic soda as it destroys the plastic fittings.

To unblock a bath, basin or sink:

- Scoop out most of the water
- Cover the overflow opening with a rag or something similar
- Using a toilet brush or mop, pump it up and down rapidly

Blockages in toilets are usually caused by unusual objects - nappies, toys or toilet fresheners.

To unblock a toilet:

- If the pan is already full, scoop out some of the water into a bucket
- Using a toilet brush, mop, or plunger, push it to the bottom of the pan
- Pump it up and down vigorously about 10 times. This creates a vacuum and pressure which may shift the blockage
- Flush the toilet to see whether the blockage has gone
- You may need to repeat this process several times before the blockage is gone

If there is no improvement after a couple of attempts to either of these solutions, or more than one fitting is blocked, then you should contact us.

Water

Shutting off your water supply

At times we may need you to turn off your water supply. You should make sure you know where your stopcock is - write its location in the front of this booklet. It is wise to test it twice a year to make sure it is working. You can do this by shutting it off to check it closes, then opening it fully. Then close it slightly by turning it a little towards off.

(Note: if you do have to turn off your water supply you may also need to turn off your heating system)

Some items, such as a toilet cistern, have their own isolation valves, so the water supply to this item can be turned off without it affecting anything else in your property. If this is not the case, you may be able to turn the supply off at the gate valves on the pipes coming in from the cold/water tanks.

Leaks

If the leak is not serious you may be able to prevent it damaging other items by putting a bucket or bowl underneath it until it can be fixed.

If the water is collecting near electrical fittings, you should turn off the electricity at the mains immediately (the consumer unit).

It may be necessary to shut off the water supply. If so, you may need to turn off your central heating system and immersion heater too

Electrics

No power to your home

If you have no power at all, firstly check with your neighbours to see if they still have power - it may be a local power cut. If so contact your electricity provider. If this is not the case, and you have a credit or token meter, check that it is in credit before contacting us.

No power to your sockets or no power to your lights

Modern fuse boards have trip switches for different parts of your electrical supply. These are very sensitive and will trip if a fault develops with an appliance or light e.g. an iron, kettle, or light bulb. Follow these simple steps to see if you can fix or isolate the fault.

1. Check your fuse board to see if one of these trip switches is in the off position. If this has happened, check which room or lighting circuit is affected - there should be a description above the affected switch
2. Turn off the MAIN SWITCH - this is normally bigger and a different colour to the other switches
3. If it is an appliance circuit, unplug you appliances, particularly any that you have just been using
4. Turn on the switch that has tripped, then turn back on the main switch
5. One by one turn back on your electrical appliances. This should either completely resolve your problem or identify which appliance is causing the problem
6. If it is your lighting circuit turn off the main switch, and then turn off any lights in the area affected
7. Turn on the switch that has tripped, then turn back on the main switch

8. Turn on the lights you just turned off one at a time - you may find that one does not work which probably means that you need a new bulb. If this is the case, before taking it out and putting in a new one make sure the light socket is off

If you are still having a problem then let us know.

DIY

We welcome you decorating the interior parts of your home and fence panels if you have them, but please be aware you should not use any textured paint/coating on walls or ceilings.

If you want to make any changes or improvements to your home, you must get written permission from your Housing Officer first unless it is decorating. If you do not you will be charged for any future repairs, or be asked to put the property back to its original condition at your own cost. This is also a breach of your tenancy conditions and could result in legal action being taken.

Examples of alterations are:

- Changes to kitchen or bathroom fixtures and fittings, including shower installations
- Knocking down walls (inside your home or garden)
- Changing fixtures/fittings relating to water, gas, or electricity services - you must use suitably qualified people to do this sort of work and get certificates for any gas or electrical work carried out
- Erecting conservatories, porches, or decking
- Laminate flooring
- Satellite dishes
- Electrical light fittings
- Solar/PV panels
- Installing CCTV

Some alterations will need building control or planning permission before they happen which must be sought at your own cost if we have agreed to the work.

Depending on the work being done you may be entitled to compensation for the work when you leave your home. You will be advised about this when you ask for permission to do the work.

Insurance

Contents insurance is your responsibility which you should take out to cover the cost of replacing items such as carpets, curtains, furnishings and other possessions in case of accidents or if there is a problem with the building such as burst pipes or a leaking roof.

Reading Borough Council has teamed up with Crystal Insurance Scheme who provides insurance for social housing tenants. If you would like to know more about this, your Tenant Services can provide you with a leaflet (Tel: 0118 937 2161), or you can request one via e-mail (Webform@reading.gov.uk). Alternatively you can contact them direct on 0345 450 7286 or write to them at crystal@thistleinsurance.co.uk.

HOW TO CONTACT US

Contacting us

Getting in touch with us is easy.

Online:	www.reading.gov.uk/rbctenantrepairs
	Free: 0800 318 296
Phone:	Mobiles: 0118 9373757
	Out of Hours: 0118 937 3737 (between 4 p.m. and 9 a.m. weekdays, and any time at the weekends)
Email:	Webform@reading.gov.uk
Write to us:	Council House Repairs, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading,
<Text Type?> service:	81722

Opening Hours

Reception	Monday to Friday	09:00 to 17:00
Telephone	Monday to Friday	09:00 to 17:00

Outside of our opening hours telephone calls are automatically transferred to our emergency out of hour's service.

Other useful numbers

Crystal Insurance Scheme	0345 450 7286	crystal@thistleinsurance.co.uk
Emergency Services	999	
Police Non-Urgent/Enquiry Line	101	
NHS Non-Urgent help	111	
Gas Leaks	0800 111 999	www.sgn.co.uk
Power Cuts	105 - National Grid or 0800 072 7282 - Scottish and Southern Electricity Network (SSEN)	www.ssen.co.uk
Citizens Advice Bureau	0344 111 444	www.citizensadvice.org.uk