

SECTION E: LOOKING AFTER YOUR HOME AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

This section includes:

- ◆ Condensation
- ◆ Garden Service
- ◆ Communal areas
- ◆ Running a Business from Home
- ◆ Car Repairs

CONDENSATION

What is condensation?

All air contains a certain amount of “invisible” water vapour. Condensation frequently occurs when air, carrying water vapour, comes into contact with a cold surface. This can be seen, for example, on the bathroom mirror when you have had a hot bath.

Condensation may show up as patches of black mould; this grows in the moisture soaked up by the wall. Black mould will usually grow on an outside wall or behind a piece of furniture.

What can be done to avoid condensation?

Normal activities such as washing, bathing and cooking produce moisture. These activities cannot be avoided but the moisture produced can be limited.

There are several easy ways to do this:

- Keep saucepan lids on when cooking;
- Dry clothes outside wherever possible;
- Do not use bottled gas or paraffin heaters in your home -these are dangerous and the Council can take action under your tenancy agreement to stop you using them.
- Let as much steam as possible out of your home by opening windows, especially in your kitchen and bathroom.

The best solution is to make sure that there is always some ventilation. If you have vents or air bricks you must not block them up and if you have an anti-condensation fan fitted, you should use it. Try to keep the internal doors to the kitchen and bathroom closed to stop moisture spreading to other parts of your home.

The way in which you use your heating can also affect condensation. If you heat your home to a high temperature and then let it go cold you will increase the risk of condensation. It is better and cheaper to have a more continuous low level of heating. It is also cheaper to use the central heating for the whole property on a constant low setting than a fire in just one room. This will have a considerable effect on cutting down damp and condensation. If you would like more advice please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Office.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND SURROUNDINGS

Gardens



If you have your own garden, it is your responsibility to cut the grass and hedges, prune any trees and keep the borders in a tidy condition. Trees must be treated with care and if you are unsure what to do we will give you advice. Every 3 years the Council's tree specialist will inspect the trees in your area to ensure that they are healthy. Please note that the Neighbourhood Housing Offices and Council cash offices sell green refuse sacks for garden rubbish that will be removed by the Council's refuse service.

If you are elderly or have a disability and have no-one living at home or nearby who can do the garden for you the Council may be able to help you. Ask for details at your Neighbourhood Housing Office.

Responsibility for Boundary Fences and Hedges

When you move into your home we will tell you who is responsible for looking after hedges and fences.

If you are responsible for a hedge next to a footpath or ginnel, you must maintain both sides and ensure that any footpath or ginnel is not obstructed by the hedge.

If you are unsure about your responsibilities contact your Neighbourhood Housing Office.

COMMUNAL AREAS

Stairways and Halls

If you have communal (or shared) halls and stairs to your home you are responsible, together with all the other residents, for cleaning these areas. It is best if you can agree with your neighbours who should clean which areas.

The walls/stairs/hallways should be kept free from any items, rubbish, obstructions so that everyone would be able to escape safely if a fire broke out. Rubbish poses a fire risk in these areas and should never be stored in stairways and halls.



Communal Gardens

The Council will maintain the grass and gardens to communal areas. The grass will be cut 14 times between March and October or approximately every 2 weeks although this can vary during wet weather.

We don't pick up the grass clippings because it would double the cost of the work to do so. We cut hedges twice a year firstly during June and July and secondly between October and December.

We inspect shrub and rose beds at least every 6 weeks during the summer. We inspect all trees on a 3 year cycle as mentioned above.



PEST CONTROL SERVICE

As householders we occasionally have problems caused by animals or insects, for instance rats, wasps and bees. If you experience problems you can contact the Council's Pest Control service. There is a charge for the service except for some people on state benefits.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Can I run a business from home?

Your home is let to you for you to live in rather than for business purposes. However some business activities that do not disturb your neighbours may be acceptable. Examples of this may be window cleaners, driving instructors, typing services and painting and decorating.

You must seek permission from the Council for any business you wish to run from home. If agreement is given and it causes a nuisance to your neighbour you will have to stop using your home for the business.

Can I carry out car repairs at home?

It is acceptable for you to carry out occasional repairs to your vehicle only. However we generally find that it is unacceptable to neighbours for people to regularly carry out car repair work and we will generally refuse requests for people to run car businesses from home.

Can I park an untaxed car at home?

Yes, but you must get our permission and the vehicle must be roadworthy and is parked on a hardstanding within your property and not on the roadway. You must also have obtained a SORN (Statutory Off the Road Notice) from the DVLA.

It is illegal to park an untaxed vehicle on the public highway. The Council will also take legal action to ensure that untaxed and unroadworthy vehicles are removed from hardstandings, gardens, council roads and parking areas.

Can I park commercial vehicles at home?

Commercial vehicles, caravans, motor homes and boats must **not** be parked on the garden, driveway, paved area around your home or on any communal parking areas without the council's agreement in writing.

What help is available for parking?

Many council estates were designed before there was widespread car ownership and have limited parking available. The Council does give grants for helping tenants with the cost of installing a hardstanding and dropped kerbs in their garden. You must in any event obtain permission from your Neighbourhood Office for this. Each year we do allocate a small amount of money for environmental improvements, improving parking facilities. This is discussed at the Area Panel meetings see Section G "Getting involved".

In some areas we do provide parking areas and lay-bys. Please note that we do not allocate specific spaces to individual tenants and we would ask you to ensure that residents always have priority to park in these areas before visitors. Where residents have a disability which means that they cannot walk far they may be able to request that a disabled parking space is provided on the roadside (although any registered disabled person may use this). For further details contact your Neighbourhood Housing Office.

How can I resolve parking problems with my neighbours?

If you are having a dispute with your neighbour about being able to park you can contact your housing officer who will advise you what help the Council can offer. Often parking disputes are best resolved by reaching an agreement with your neighbours regarding who should have priority to park. ARCH Mediation can help you reach such an agreement – for further information see Section F “Problems with Neighbours and Anti-social behaviour”.

How can I get rid of bulky items?

The Council may be able to remove one or two larger items of furniture as well as safely disposing of old fridges and freezers. Contact your Neighbourhood Housing Office for more information or phone the Refuse Section 01423 556644.

For carrying out Improvements please see **Section B Your rights**.

For guidance regarding saving energy see **Section I “Looking after your environment”**.