

HEALTH AND SAFETY HANDBOOK

Keeping your home and the neighbourhood safe



Welcome to your **health and safety handbook**. Keeping you safe in your home and neighbourhood is a top priority for us.

We want you to know you can trust us to keep your home safe for all those who live in it.

As part of this we carry out gas and electrical safety checks in line with statutory guidelines. Our performance is monitored by the Regulator of Social Housing and audited by an independent body. We also send yearly reports on these services to our board of management and to the regulator.

Please take the time to read this handbook. If you have any questions get in touch. You will find our contact details at the end of the handbook.

About this handbook

This handbook explains what we do to keep your home safe for you to live in, and how you can help keep it that way. It also includes hints and advice on home safety that we hope you find informative and useful.

This handbook was reviewed before going to print by your Resident Panel, in February 2024.

Contacting us about building health and safety

Call ☎ 020 7704 2324

Email us on info@barnsbury.org

Online at [barnsbury.org/
resident-information/repairs](https://barnsbury.org/resident-information/repairs)

Report emergency repairs only after hours ☎ 0300 131 7300

Fire safety

The main causes of fire in the home

Fires can start suddenly and spread quickly, damaging your home and belongings and putting lives in danger. Fires in homes are almost always caused by one of these:

- ✓ cooking
- ✓ candles
- ✓ portable heaters
- ✓ smoking
- ✓ careless use of heaters
- ✓ using electrical gadgets.



What we do to keep you safe

- ✓ Your home has the required number of approved heat, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms installed, appropriate to your home's size and your household needs.
- ✓ Fire alarm systems in shared parts of your building are tested weekly by one of our team and serviced annually by a certified professional company/partner. Let us know if you have any problem with hearing that might make it hard for you to hear an alarm. We should be able to help you get specially enhanced equipment.
- ✓ There are fire extinguishers in shared areas of our sheltered housing at Highbury View. There is also a fire blanket in the kitchen in the bungalow.
- ✓ Flats in shared buildings are being fitted with an approved 30-minute fire door. These can hold in a fire for at least 30 minutes, allowing time either for escape or the Fire Service to arrive. Please do not tamper with any fire door. A fire door could save your life.
- ✓ Regular fire safety checks are carried out by our maintenance team. These make sure all shared areas are kept clear of any items that might stop or slow down people needing to get out of the building quickly in an emergency.
- ✓ Emergency lighting in blocks is tested regularly.
- ✓ If you live in a building with a shared stairwell, we carry out regular fire risk assessments to make sure these are clear of anything that could get in the way of people escaping danger.
- ✓ Fire risk assessments are done by a qualified person who will, when assessing any shared building, also look for ways to improve its fire safety systems.

Keep all personal items inside your own home

Do not store any of your personal items in shared parts of the building, not even a doormat. Anything you leave outside your own front door could turn into a hazard in an emergency.

What you can do to help keep yourself safe

These are some simple steps you can take to avoid a fire:

- ✓ Don't leave chip or other food pans cooking unwatched.
- ✓ Be careful not to overload electrical sockets.
- ✓ Only use the charger that was provided by the manufacturer to recharge devices like mobile phones, laptops or watches. There is a high risk of cheap replacements catching fire.
- ✓ Unplug chargers when they are not being used and never leave them plugged in overnight.
- ✓ Close your living room and kitchen doors at night. If a fire does break out this will help to hold back smoke and flames, giving you vital time to escape or call for help.
- ✓ Keep all matches well out of reach of children.
- ✓ Keep portable heaters away from curtains and furniture. Only use the type with a safety cut-out. This turns it off if it falls over. Do not use electric bar heaters.
- ✓ Make sure your furniture is fire retardant.
- ✓ Keep anything in your home that could burn away from all heat sources.
- ✓ Put candles on a stable surface only and keep an eye on them when lit. Make sure candles are properly extinguished before you leave the room.
- ✓ Do not put candles or incense anywhere near items that could burn, like blinds, curtains or clothing, on a shelf with another level above it or where children could reach them.
- ✓ Do not leave burning candles or incense on window sills.
- ✓ Use a proper holder to catch the ash as the ambers from incense get very hot and can start a fire.
- ✓ Do not open up boarded-up fireplaces.
- ✓ Around 48% of all domestic fires start in the kitchen. By far the most common cause of a house fire is cooking left unattended.

What's your escape plan?

Even with care, fires can happen. They can spread quickly so you need a plan: how would you and everyone who lives in or visits your home get out? How can you make sure they all know your plan. Is the escape route clear? Check it regularly.

If a fire starts in your home

- 1 Close the door of the room where the fire is.
- 2 Get everyone out of the house if that is possible.
- 3 If the fire is not in your home and you are in a flat and have to go down shared stairs to get out, the Fire Service advises you to stay put to avoid getting trapped in the stairwell.
- 4 If you need to break a window, the safest way is breaking the glass in the bottom corner.
- 5 Call the fire brigade on 999. Do not assume someone else will or has done this.
- 6 Warn your neighbours and do not go back into the property.

Do you live in a building shared with other tenants?

Make sure you know the fire safety plan for your block, whether it is to stay put or evacuate if a fire breaks out.

This advice will be on the fire safety signs on the walls in the shared parts of the building.

Let us know if you need more help understanding the fire safety plan for your building.

Fire safety in shared areas

If you live in a block with a shared stairwell or other shared areas, there are a few other things you need to think about.

- ✓ Keep clear all shared electrical cupboards and other areas, like under the stairs and on landings.
- ✓ Tell us promptly if there are any issues, including fly-tipped rubbish, someone storing items in any of these spaces unauthorised, or a problem with door entry systems.
- ✓ Keep shared doors closed and never wedge them open. This could undermine security in your building and/or let a fire spread more easily.
- ✓ Keep the bin stores tidy and take any excess rubbish or unwanted household items to the recycling centre or the tip.

Looking after your smoke alarm

- ✓ Check your smoke alarm once a week to make sure it is working.
- ✓ If your alarm is beeping continuously it has detected smoke and you need to act immediately to stay safe.
- ✓ If your alarm beeps every now and then, your battery is low or faulty or the 'alarm memory' is faulty so needs attention. Replace the battery or call us if you need help doing it.
- ✓ Never disconnect the alarm if it goes off by mistake.
- ✓ Vacuum the grill area of your smoke alarm every 12 months.
- ✓ Never cover smoke alarms.
- ✓ Report any problems with the smoke alarm to us.

Gas safety

What we do to keep you safe

By law, we and all other landlords have to check once a year all gas appliances we have fitted and the flues and pipework to make sure all are safely maintained. Gas appliances that are not serviced regularly can become dangerous and can kill.

We have to carry out this service before the anniversary date on the previous certificate expires.

- ✓ Our gas contractor arranges your gas safety check each year. We take all reasonable steps to agree a convenient date and time with you. These checks are essential for your safety and required by law. If you refuse to agree a suitable time for this work to be done we will start our 'no access' procedure.
- ✓ If during the safety check the contractor finds more work is needed they will call you to arrange an appointment to do these repairs.
- ✓ You will be sent a copy of the safety certificate within 28 days. Please keep this safe, next to your appliance if possible, to help with any later inspections.

- ✓ We carry out gas safety checks on all empty homes, and we stop the gas supply until the home is let again.
- ✓ All operatives or contractors working in our homes are properly gas qualified for the work they undertake.
- ✓ All gas cookers must be fitted with a stability bracket.
- ✓ At each annual service a gas engineer will check that everything has been fitted correctly. They will check that all gas appliances in your home are working correctly. We will repair any appliance we own, such as the boiler or fires.
- ✓ If there is a problem with an appliance that belongs to you, we will not do the repairs. Our contractor may fix a warning label to your appliance to warn you it is not safe to use, or will disconnect the appliance. It is illegal to remove this label. It is also illegal to use the appliance until it has been made safe to use. You are responsible for arranging any repairs needed.

What to do if you think you have a gas leak

- 1 Open all doors and windows.
- 2 Do not turn off or on any electrical items or switches.
- 3 If any gas appliances have been left on, turn them off.
- 4 If the pilot light is still on and your gas appliances are all off there may be a leak.
- 5 Turn off the gas tap at the mains.

Phone the National Gas Emergency Number immediately on 0800 111 999.

This is a free phone number unless you are calling from a mobile phone.

After you have called the emergency number, call our repairs number to tell us about the leak on 020 7704 2324.



What you can do to help keep yourself gas safe

Gas safety checks are vital for your safety and are required by law.

- ✓ Keep the appointment our gas contractor gives for the annual safety check. If you can't make that date call the contractor to agree a new date. This must be within a year of the last check.

- ✓ If you have a prepayment meter make sure you have at least emergency credit on your electric and gas meter for the safety check to be finished.
- ✓ Before the check, clear the area around your boiler so the engineer has easy access to it.
- ✓ If you can smell gas, call the Gas Emergency Service on ☎0800 111 999

Try these first! Sorting out a fault with your boiler

Please try these before you call us:

- 1 If you have a pre-pay meter, check it is in credit.
- 2 Check there has not been a power cut and that power is running to the boiler.
- 3 Has the pilot light gone out?
- 4 Try to reset the boiler. If you do not have the instruction manual ask us for a copy.
- 5 Your boiler has a pressure gauge with a green marker that should be between 1 and 1.5 bar when your heating system is cold. If the marker is lower call us for advice.
- 6 Check the boiler has not been turned onto the *hot water only* setting or onto a timer.
- 7 If you have a thermostat, check the temperature it is set to is right or select 30°C to test the boiler. Once the boiler is working again you can lower the temperature.
- 8 Check the batteries in the programmer.
- 9 In very cold weather the condensate pipe running from your boiler to the wall outside of your property can freeze, making your boiler shut down. Pouring warm water on the pipe will fix it.

Staying gas safe - your own appliances

Before you install any new gas appliance, including a cooker, you must first get our written permission. You will also need to get it installed, serviced and repaired by an approved Gas Safe-registered engineer only.

- ✓ If you live in a flat, by law any new gas cooker must have a flame supervision device fitted. This shuts off the gas supply immediately if the flame goes out unexpectedly, to prevent a gas explosion or fire.
- ✓ Any new gas cooker must be fitted by a qualified, Gas Safe-registered engineer and the certificate sent to us.
- ✓ You are not allowed to install gas fires in your home.
- ✓ Any work you want done to your home that would affect the gas system has to be approved in writing by us before any work starts.
- ✓ If you suspect any problem with a gas appliance you own please call the repairs line on ☎020 7704 2324.

Carbon monoxide

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas you cannot smell or taste. Breathing it in can make you unwell, and it can kill if you are exposed to high levels.

Carbon monoxide is generated when fuels like gas, oil, coal and wood do not burn fully.

Accidental exposure to it is most commonly caused by incorrectly installed, poorly maintained or poorly ventilated household appliances like cookers, heaters or central heating boilers.

What we do to keep you safe

- ✓ We make sure homes with gas heating appliances are fitted with a carbon monoxide detector alarm and are appropriately ventilated.
- ✓ We make sure your carbon monoxide detector is checked during your annual gas check and service. If any fault is identified a temporary alarm is fitted until the fault is repaired.
- ✓ We respond as an emergency to any report that a carbon monoxide alarm has been activated. If needed we replace the detector. Depending on the situation, one of our staff will inspect and assess the fault. If we think it necessary we may ask our gas consultants to do a more thorough investigation.

- ✓ If your carbon monoxide detector is triggered and you live in our sheltered housing, a message is sent to our monitoring agency. They will get in touch with you directly through the handset. If you do not answer the call they will send the emergency services to your home.

We are replacing all carbon monoxide alarms installed 10 years ago, or sooner if a fault develops. The new alarm has a sealed-in battery.

What to do if your carbon monoxide alarm goes off

- 1 This is an emergency. Turn off all gas appliances and ventilate the room.
- 2 Phone the National Gas Emergency Number at once on ☎0800 111 999.
- 3 Call us promptly to let us know the alarm went off.

What you can do to help keep yourself safe

- ✓ Do not remove any carbon monoxide detector alarms we have fitted in your home. They are there for your safety and could save your life.
- ✓ Tell us promptly if there is any problem with your carbon monoxide detector alarm.
- ✓ Do not cover vents in windows. They ventilate your home so fumes do not build up.
- ✓ If your alarm beeps every now and then, your battery is low or faulty or the 'alarm memory' is faulty. Replace the battery. If this doesn't solve the problem or you cannot reach the alarm safely contact us.

Electrical safety

Electrical faults are a major cause of fires and electricity can cause injuries like burns, falls and electric shocks.

We carry out regular electrical inspections and tests because

electrical wiring, sockets, switches and other domestic electrics deteriorate due to damage, wear and tear, corrosion, overloading the supply, ageing and other environmental influences.

What we do to keep you safe

We do an electrical safety check:

- ✓ to your home every five years and promptly put right any problems identified
- ✓ every five years in shared areas of buildings and promptly put right any problems identified
- ✓ after finishing any major building work in your home that affects, alters or upgrades the electrical services
- ✓ when a home is left empty by its last tenant. Any work it needs is finished before it is let again.

- ✓ A new certificate is issued if we upgrade or alter your electrics.
- ✓ We keep a register detailing all electrical checks carried out to effectively manage and monitor electrical safety across all our housing stock.
- ✓ We make sure anyone doing electrical works in our homes and buildings, be they our employees or a contractor, is properly electrically qualified to do this work.

What you can do to help keep yourself safe:

- ✓ Make sure you let us in to do your electrical safety checks.
- ✓ Do not overload power circuits by plugging lots of extension cables into your sockets.
- ✓ Do not try to do any electrical works yourself, other than changing a plug or a lightbulb.
- ✓ If you use extension leads don't let them trail where they could trip someone or get accidentally pulled out.
- ✓ Switch off mobile, laptop and other chargers when they are not being used and check none are overheating. Do not leave chargers on overnight.

Try these first if the power in your home goes out

Has something in your home cut the power?

- 1 Check the trip-switch or fuses on your fuseboard to make sure it hasn't been caused by a faulty appliance.
- 2 If the trip switch is on, turn it off and back on again.
- 3 If the power does not come back, push the 'test' button. If the switch trips, you have a faulty appliance.
- 4 To find the faulty appliance, turn them all off then turn the switch back on.
- 5 Switch the appliances back on one by one. If the power trips when you turn one on, that is the faulty one. It might just be a light bulb that needs replacing.

Have others lost power too?

If your neighbours have the same problem it may be a power cut so we cannot help. Call your electricity supplier and ask if they are aware of the problem. If they say yes, ask how long they expect your power to be off.

Water safety

The best known of several bacterial diseases that spread through water is Legionnaires' disease (legionella). It is a form of pneumonia caused by infected water droplets or mist and it can kill.

Legionella bacteria can be found in taps or showerheads that have been left unused for a while or in water left to stagnate in pipes or tanks.

Breathing in tiny droplets of water contaminated by *Legionella pneumophila* or related bacteria takes it into your lungs. It is a disease that can affect anybody, but hits worst those made vulnerable by age, illness, a suppressed immune system or smoking, for example.

To protect you our water safety precautions focus on the most likely risk sources: anything in your home or neighbourhood used to channel water where, left unused, these bacteria might build up.

What we do to keep you safe

- ✓ Each month we check any taps in areas you share with neighbours. If we find anything of concern we put the problem right promptly.
- ✓ We do regular scheduled water checks to shared water tanks. We may need to go through your home to reach a tank. Again, if our checks find anything of concern we put it right promptly. If we find a communal water tank that is no longer used we take it out.
- ✓ We keep a register of all water checks done to manage and monitor our water safety processes.
- ✓ We set your boiler at the temperature known to prevent legionella building up.
- ✓ If a home is left empty between tenancies, we flush through the water pipework and replace the shower hose and head before a new tenant moves in.
- ✓ We make sure anyone working in any of our homes, as an employee or contractor, is properly trained for the work.
- ✓ All new baths we fit have a thermostatic mixing valve that cuts the risk of scalding and makes sure water coming out of the taps is at a safe temperature (less than 44°C).

What you can do to help keep yourself safe

- ✓ Give us quick access if we need to go through your home to inspect or work on a communal water tank.
- ✓ Make sure you regularly run water through all your taps and through the shower head.
- ✓ Do not let water sit stagnating in taps, showers, pipes or basins you don't use regularly.
- ✓ Unscrew your shower head regularly and dip it in disinfectant for a few minutes.
- ✓ If you are away from home for more than 48 hours, run all the taps and other water outlets like the shower for five minutes when you get back.
- ✓ When you return from a longer holiday or break run water through all your taps and the shower head for 10 minutes. Soak your shower head in disinfectant for several hours.
- ✓ Unless you use a garden hose pipe daily, first turn the water on without a spray nozzle and run for it for five minutes.
- ✓ Do not change the water temperature setting on your boiler. It has been set to that level for your safety.

Asbestos safety

Asbestos was widely used in the building trade until 1999. It is not a safety risk unless it is disturbed in some way, like being pierced or broken up.

If it is disturbed the fibres released can, if breathed in over a long time, cause serious health risks. If it stays mixed, bound or sealed with other materials it will remain safe.

Asbestos is a strong, long-lasting fibre. It does not catch fire and was a good insulator so it was used to protect the structure of a building from fire and excess heat.

Because it had so many uses materials containing asbestos can be found in all types of buildings, especially those built or refurbished between 1950 and 1999.

What we do to keep you safe

- ✓ We carry out surveys of shared areas in buildings to identify any asbestos, monitor its condition and make sure it is not disturbed.
- ✓ When any major building work is planned we first study our asbestos information for the property. If needed we carry out another asbestos survey to make sure, as far as we can, all asbestos is identified.
- ✓ If your home needs a repair we give our staff and contractors the asbestos information for the property you live in.
- ✓ We make sure our staff and contractors get regular asbestos awareness training so they are able to identify asbestos risks or concerns.
- ✓ We carry out an asbestos check on every home that falls empty. If it hasn't already been surveyed for asbestos we do a full survey.
- ✓ We keep a register listing details of all asbestos identified, or assumed, and where any asbestos has been removed to make sure we effectively manage and monitor our asbestos safety process.
- ✓ If your home is known to have or is at risk of having asbestos we will let you know, and will tell you what you need to do to avoid disturbing the asbestos or have it removed.
- ✓ Asbestos surveys and removing asbestos are both carried out by our approved and licensed contractor.

What you can do to help keep yourself safe

Contact us before you do any DIY that will disturb the fabric of the building. Scraping off old wallpaper or painting walls is perfectly safe. But tell us before you do any work:

- ✓ like removing, sanding, drilling or scraping any artex coatings
- ✓ like drilling into a wall unless it involves very minor work like, for example, putting up a picture frame or hook
- ✓ that will disturb any material in the loft area
- ✓ in or to your heating cupboard or on or around pipes with lagging (insulating material).

See also page seven of your *Taking good care of your home* booklet.

Do you think you have asbestos in your home?

Report it to us without delay.

Phone us on ☎ 020 7704 2324

Email us on info@barnsbury.org

Don't try to remove it yourself. Leave it exactly as you found it.

Safety in shared areas

Communal safety covers matters like keeping unwanted callers out of the building and keeping shared areas inside and outside your building clear of anything that could cause injury, catch fire or slow down or stop you and others escaping in an emergency.

Our staff carry out regular health and safety inspections of the common parts of our properties. If you have any health and safety concerns, please report them to us as soon as you can.

You are very welcome to join staff inspecting estates and shared areas.

What we do to keep you safe

- ✓ If your building has a door entry system we keep it in good working order.
- ✓ We do visual inspections of each shared building to identify and remove hazards.
- ✓ We provide a bin store for your household's normal daily rubbish.

What you can do to help keep yourself safe

- ✓ Only 'buzz in' people you know or are expecting to avoid letting unwanted visitors into the building.
- ✓ Keep your shared passageways free of anything that could be a trip or fire hazard.
- ✓ Do not leave or store anything in the shared electrical cupboards or any other space, including under stairs.
- ✓ Report promptly any flytipping, any items stored without our permission, problems with the door entry systems or anything else affecting shared spaces.
- ✓ Keep doors in shared areas closed. Do not wedge them open as it would make your building less secure and a fire could spread much more easily.
- ✓ Keep bin stores tidy. If you have too much rubbish for the bins or have large unwanted household goods take them to the recycling centre or tip.



Safety in lifts

Some of you live in a building with a shared lift or a stair lift. These are vital for those of you who cannot use the stairs to reach your home or get out of the building. We have a duty to keep these maintained to a standard safe for use.

What we do to keep you safe

- ✓ Carry out a planned check of all our lifts every two months, doing promptly any works the check identifies.
- ✓ Upgrade and replace lift parts before they end their 'useful life'.
- ✓ Respond promptly if anyone reports people trapped in a lift.
- ✓ Respond promptly to any report of a problem with lift use or operation.

What you can do to help keep yourself safe

- ✓ Follow the instructions clearly displayed in the lift. This will include what to do if there is a problem and who to contact in an emergency and how.
- ✓ Each lift displays the maximum weight limit. Do not overload it.
- ✓ Tell us promptly if there are any problems with a lift.

General household safety

More people are killed or injured by an accident in the home than any other type of accident. This checklist should help you avoid some of the more common risks.

- ✓ Keep floors and floor coverings in good condition.
- ✓ Replace used or broken light bulbs at once. If you find it hard to do this because of your age, disability or poor health ask us for help.
- ✓ Keep stairs well lit.
- ✓ Use non-slip polishes and mats.
- ✓ Keep children away from hobs and cookers and turn pan handles away from the front and sides of the cooker.
- ✓ Keep all medicines and cleaning products out of children's reach.
- ✓ Avoid long flexes and replace worn flexes immediately. Keep flexes away from cookers. Keep the kettle flex out of reach of small children and toddlers.
- ✓ Do not mix toilet cleaners and bleach. Doing this can generate a harmful gas.
- ✓ Do not leave matches or lighters where young children can reach them.

Lofts

Lofts are not designed for storage. Anything you store in your loft is there at your own risk.

There is an added risk of fire if you cover electric cables with anything that could catch fire.

If we need to get into your loft to do maintenance or repairs, you might be asked to remove anything you have stored there.

If you are moving out make sure you clear everything out of the loft or we may charge you the cost of getting it cleared ourselves.



Bats, pests and vermin

Common pests found in and around the home include rats and mice, wasps, fleas, bees and bats. Rats can spread diseases like Weil's disease, salmonella and rat bite fever.

Mice are a nuisance and can do a lot of damage to your plumbing (causing flooding) and cabling (causing a fire). You can buy traps for rats and mice from most hardware stores. Follow the instructions carefully.

Pest control is your responsibility unless an infestation has spread to other flats and not just your own.

For infestations of rats, mice, bees or cockroaches please ask us for professional advice on treating them. They can be hard to get rid of on your own.

Bats are mostly harmless and, at worst, are classed as a nuisance. Most people live happily alongside bats, rarely noticing they are even there. They are no risk to you if you do not handle them.

Bats are also protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to kill, catch or keep bats, or to destroy or block off their roosts.

Extra health and safety measures

In very rare circumstances, such as flooding or an outbreak of infection, we may have no choice but to put in place extra measures to keep you safe. For example, we might need you to follow extra hygiene practices or restrict the number of people who visit your home.

If this happens we will always keep you informed, explaining these measures clearly and the reasons for them. They may also mean some of our services take longer than usual to carry out. Your safety will always be our top priority.

Reporting or asking about health and safety matters

Call us on ☎ 020 7704 2324

Email us on info@barnsbury.org

Report a gas leak or your carbon monoxide alarm going off:
National Gas Emergency Number
on ☎ 0800 111 999

Report a house fire to the emergency services ☎ 999
