

# reporting your **repairs** looking after **your home**

your guide to who is responsible for what...



# reporting your repairs looking after your home

## Maintenance

Ashton Pioneer Homes provides a quick, efficient and fair repair service. Repairs may be reported in person either in our offices or to a member of staff, via telephone, writing to us or by e-mail. You may also inform any member of staff of a repair that you require to be carried out

When you report a repair we will ask you to provide us with some details;

- Your name and address or tenant reference
- Nature of the repair
- Your contact details to enable access arrangements

We will endeavour to inform you as to when the job will be completed at a convenient time for you.

Ashton Pioneer Homes have 4 classifications of repairs with some typical examples below:

- **Emergency repairs** - Completed within 24 hours. May affect safety, security or health – include burst water pipes or leaks, gas leaks, total lighting failure and failure of heating systems during the winter (October to March)
- **Urgent repairs** - Within 48 hours. Include most electrical problems, dangerous glazing, broken toilet pans.
- **Routine repairs** - Within 7 days. For example, repairs to doors, windows and kitchen units.
- **General repairs** - Within 28 days. Include plastering and anything that has to be made, eg, gates, fence panels, and replacement doors.

At times we have to order specialist components from manufacturers such as external doors. Unfortunately such repairs will take longer to carry out. When this occurs we will advise you of progress.

**For emergency repairs ONLY outside office hours, please call 0161 343 8128.  
For heating failures in the winter months please call 0161 304 7111**

For all other repairs please contact 0161 343 8128.

If you smell gas contact Transco immediately – 0800 111 999

Our contractors are required to carry identification always ask to see a copy of the identification card. If you are in doubt please contact our office to verify.

We will try to arrange a time convenient for you. Please bear in mind that if a specific appointment is made and you are not in the job will be cancelled. If you realise that you will not be able to provide access please call us at the office to rearrange.

If you are not happy with a standard of repair or indeed the length of time taken to carry out a repair please do not hesitate to contact us in order that we can investigate the matter.

## **Repair Responsibilities**

### **Ashton Pioneer Homes Responsibilities**

#### **Building Structure:**

Roof covering, rainwater goods, external and internal walls and ceilings, external doors, frames and windows (includes ironmongery), waste pipes, sanitary ware, added plaster.

Outside your home, including communal areas: drains, steps, paths essential for access to the home, gates and boundaries with public areas. Entrance doors, halls, stairways, lifts, lighting (to flats & maisonettes only).

Plumbing, electrical and heating systems: water supply, pipes and taps, electrical wiring, sockets, switches and light fitting. Annual gas checks (legal requirement) to central heating system.

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## Tenant Responsibilities

Decoration inside your home, including filling minor cracks, replacing plugs, bulbs, fuses, washers to taps, toilet seats. Unblocking sinks, toilets, baths, basins and gullies. Replacing glass if damaged by you. Maintaining internal locks, door handles and drawer handles. TV aerial sockets (except communal system). Replacing floor coverings, curtain rails. Removal of pests (includes wasps, bees, ants & vermin). Bleeding of radiators (not combination 'combi' boilers). Maintenance of your garden. Testing smoke alarms and replacing batteries. Damage to kitchen units and worktops which are not considered to be fair wear and tear. Installation of cookers and washing machines.

Any repairs which have been caused by misuse/damage caused by you or your visitors will be charged directly to you whether or not the damage is an accident or deliberate. This is in line with Ashton Pioneer Homes Rechargeable Repair policy. A copy of the policy is available on request.

## Insurance

Ashton Pioneer Homes hold insurance for all property structures however; we are not responsible for your belongings. You must arrange insurance cover for the contents of your home. If a flood, fire, burst pipe or accidental damage occurs in your home we are not responsible for carrying repairs etc to your belongings. It could have major financial implications for you so please take out some household insurance cover. It is not expensive.

## Going Away

If you are going away on holiday please remember to carry out the following;

- Inform a neighbour/friend of your holiday etc. in order that they can keep an eye on your property
- If going away in the winter it is advisable to leave the central heating on at a low temperature to prevent bursts due to frozen pipes
- Leave lights on a timer switch or ask a neighbour/friend to turn lights on at night time for you

- Do not leave valuable items lying around in clear view of windows. Hide small items such as jewellery or perhaps leave in a safe at a bank

## Safety in the home

Every year many accidents and injuries occur in the home which could have been easily avoidable. Please take heed of the following tips to help avoid such accidents;

- Keep medicines, matches/lighters and cleaning products away from children. You can purchase child proof locks from most children's stores
- Keep stairways well lit
- When cooking ensure that pot handles are turned inwards
- Keep children away from electrical sockets and hot pipes. When electrical sockets are not in use please use safety covers
- Use stepladders when needed
- Never smoke cigarettes etc. in bed
- Close all doors when going to bed to prevent the spread of fire and smoke
- Keep all passageways in and out of your home clear (particularly anything which could cause/encourage a fire) to prevent trip hazards and also to prevent spread of flames
- Ensure floor coverings and floors are in a safe condition i.e. carpets properly fitted
- NEVER throw water on electrical equipment or on a chip pan/burning oil
- Do not overload sockets
- Do not touch anything electrical with wet hands
- Ensure correct fuses are used in electrical equipment
- Ensure electrical equipment is wired correctly
- Avoid long extension leads and flexes
- NEVER leave a candle lit unattended or on a flammable surface

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## Adaptations to your home

In order for you to enjoy your home to its maximum potential, you have a right to carry out any improvements, alterations or additions you may require. If you wish to carry out any alterations or adaptations to your home, please ensure you follow the steps below.

1. All requests to make improvements **must** be submitted in writing and only carried out once written permission has been granted by Ashton Pioneer Homes.
2. The request to make improvements must be accompanied by drawings, details of the materials to be used etc.
3. All materials and workmanship must be of the highest quality.
4. All work must be carried out by competent tradesmen holding the relevant qualifications to carry out the work, for example electrical work can only be carried out by NIEC approved electrical contractors.
5. Any defects arising to alterations or improvements done by yourself are your responsibility to rectify. Any defects caused to the property due to faults on the alterations or improvements are similarly your responsibility.
6. Some work may also require permission from the local authority. You should check with them before starting any work.
7. If any alterations are carried out without permission Ashton Pioneer Homes has the right to either return the property to its original condition or make alterations to it, at your expense.

## 8. SHOWER INSTALLATIONS

Past experience has shown us that incorrectly installed shower installations can cause a great deal of damage to your property, due to factors such as excessive condensation, water penetrating through seals and wall tiling coming loose. Please seek permission to install a shower prior to doing so.

## Gas emergencies

- If you smell gas contact Transco immediately on 0800 111 999
- Turn off your gas supply at the meter by turning the handle to a right angle (3 O'clock or 9 O'clock position)
- Open all windows and door to allow the gas to disperse
- Do not light a cigarette or matches
- Do not switch lights or sockets on or off as a spark is created which can ignite the gas

## Gas safety checks

Ashton Pioneer Homes have a statutory duty to carry out a gas safety check (CP12) every year. This is to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning caused by faulty gas appliances. Carbon monoxide poisoning symptoms include headaches, drowsiness and chest pains but can sometimes have no apparent symptoms until it is too late. The annual gas safety checks are carried out to reduce this risk to ensure that all appliances in the property are safe to use. Please ensure that you allow Ashton Pioneer Homes and their staff access to your home to carry out this important work.

If we cannot gain access to your home to carry out the safety check a calling card will be left at the property requesting that you contact us to arrange the safety check to be carried out. If however you fail to respond Ashton Pioneer Homes will seek access through the Courts to carry out the work. This may seem quite extreme but we are only looking after your health and other people living in your property.

## Electricity

All of Ashton Pioneer Homes are fitted with a consumer unit (fuse box). They are normally located near the front door, close to the electric meter. These consumer units are easier to use than the old fuse boxes. Instead of fuses the unit is fitted with miniature circuit breakers (MCB's) which are like the old fuses but easier to

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operate and earth leakage circuit breakers (ELCB's) which are to protect against faulty appliances and electric shocks.

If you find that your electric has gone off suddenly (i.e. you still have electric supply) turn off all appliances, check your consumer unit and reset the switches (MCB's and ELCB's). Turn on your appliances one by one. If the electric fails again when you plug in/switch on a particular appliance/switch you will need to have the appliance/switch checked for faults. If it is a problem with a switch or plug we will carry out the check. If however one your appliances are faulty you will need to arrange the checks to be carried out yourself

## Condensation

### Why does condensation occur?

Condensation occurs when warm moist air meets a cold surface. The risk of condensation depends on how moist the air is and how cold the surfaces of the rooms are. Both of these depend on how the building is used.

### When condensation occurs?

Condensation occurs usually in winter because the building structure is cold and because windows are opened less and moist air cannot escape.

### Where condensation occurs

Condensation that you can see occurs often for short periods in bathrooms and kitchens because of the steamy atmosphere and quite frequently for long periods in unheated rooms.

### Three Important things:

- Stop very moist air spreading to other rooms from kitchens or bathrooms or from where clothes may be put to dry
- Provide some ventilation to all rooms so that moist air can escape
- Use the heating reasonably

## How you can prevent condensation in your home

### Reduce moisture content of room air

- Good ventilation of kitchen when washing/drying clothes and cooking. If there is an extractor fan use it. If you do not have an extractor fan open the window and keep the door closed as much as possible.
- After bathing, keep the bathroom window open and shut the door for long enough to dry out the room.
- In other rooms provide some ventilation. In old houses a lot of ventilation occurs through fireplace flues and draughty windows. In modern homes sufficient ventilation does not occur unless a window or ventilator is open for a reasonable time each day. All that is needed is a very slightly opened window or ventilator (about 1cm is sufficient)
- If washing is put out to dry open a window in that room or turn on the extractor fan enough to ventilate the room. DO NOT leave the door open or moist air will spread to other rooms and cause a problem.

### Provide reasonable heating

- Try to make sure that all rooms are at least partially heated. Condensation most often occurs in unheated bedrooms.
- To prevent condensation the heat has to keep room surfaces reasonably warm. It takes a long time for a cold building structure to warm up, so it is better to have a small amount of heat for a long period than a lot of heat for a short time (It is also more economical).
- Houses and flats left unoccupied and unheated during the day get very cold. Whenever possible, it is best to keep heating on even if at a low level.
- In houses, the rooms above a heated living room benefit to some extent from heat rising through the floor. In bungalows and most flats this does not happen. Some rooms are especially cold because they have a lot of outside walls or lose heat through the roof as well as walls. Such rooms are most likely to have condensation and some heating is therefore necessary.

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## MOULD GROWTH

Any sign of mould growth is an indication of the presence of moisture. You should wipe any mould growth with an anti-bacterial wash such as dettox, savlon or even bleach. This should be carried out at least once a week until when you wipe the surface no staining is on your fingers. Apply a stain block to keep the pigment from showing through on new paintwork. It is obviously essential that you follow the guidelines above to prevent further reoccurrence.

## Hints and Tips

### How to unblock a sink

When a sink is becoming clogged it normally takes some time to drain or it may not drain at all. To avoid this occurring you should regularly use a chemical drain cleaner (always follow the instructions on the label) you should never put anything fatty or food substances no matter small down the plughole. Also check for hair deposits.

Using a **plunger** is the easiest method of dislodging debris, you may also unscrew the trap to the sink but this involves a bit more skill.

- 1) Block the overflow for the sink with some wet tissue to give you a vacuum effect (stops air being forced down the sink simply escaping through the overflow)
- 2) With some water in the sink place a plunger over the sink waste (the rubber cup should be fully submerged), the presence of the water helps provide a 'seal'
- 3) Push the plunger down quite a few times with both hands to force water through the pipework dislodging the blockage

### How to unblock a toilet

NEVER put anything down the toilet except human waste and toilet tissue (this includes wet wipes)!!!!

Another common cause of toilets blocking are toilet rim fresheners. Check if this has fallen down the U bend (only to a toilet) prior to plunging...

DO NOT continue to flush as the bowl will simply overflow.....

You need to force water down the trap with a plunger again using both hands. Ensure that the water in the toilet bowl is pushed at force in order to clear the blockage. If this doesn't work, run some water down the sink or bath. If this does not drain the blockage is probably further down the soil pipe, a drain rod will be required.

Prevention is better than cure so please ensure that only substances that SHOULD go down the toilet (human waste and toilet roll) or Sink ( water) are the only things that you place down otherwise you will more than likely end up having to unblock your sink or toilet

## Garden Care

Many people regard "Gardening" as boring, hard work. But a chore is only a chore if you let it become one. Gardening can be enjoyable, rewarding, fruitful, educational and good exercise.

Certainly, it can be hard work but there are many ways in which a garden can be made low maintenance.

The gardening year broadly follows the traditional four seasons; each season requiring its own activity in the garden

### Spring

This is the time when we start to see the bulbs emerge from the ground. The days are lighter and cheered by yellow daffodils, crocus and snowdrops.

Generally it's a time for planting seeds, both flowers and vegetables, carefully following the instructions on the packets. If you have a greenhouse, then many seeds could have been planted inside weeks earlier and are now small plants ready to be put into the earth.

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Around Easter, Garden Centres start selling bedding plants such as petunias, begonias, geraniums, impatiens and surfinias. These are the wonderfully colourful plants, which flower throughout the summer, usually lasting until September. But a word of warning, **no** plants should be planted out until you are sure there are no risks of frost, as this will quickly kill them off.

Rose bushes should be vigorously pruned but, again, not until frosts are finished.

### Summer

A time to mostly relax and enjoy the colour. Light a barbecue on those warm summer evenings and open a bottle of wine.

Unfortunately there are some jobs that that you can't avoid doing!

Weeding: go round the garden two or three times a week and pull out any encroaching weeds. Lawn: this will have to be cut at least once a week and fed regularly to keep it looking like Wembley turf. Watering: If there is little rain, then you will have to water bedding plants at least once a day. But take care to conserve water and observe any hose pipe bans which the local authority might enforce.

**Tips:** Invest in a couple of water butts to collect rain from your roof which will be environmentally friendly. Also, put water retention pellets in the soil with plants. These will help retain moisture.

Why not consider not having a lawn and laying gravel instead? This means you can throw the lawn mower away but also will give you a lot more flexibility in layout. Flowers and small shrubs can be planted in decorative containers, which you can then move to different positions throughout the year to change the look of your garden.

### Autumn

As the days grow shorter and cooler, many flowers begin to fade and die. If they are annual bedding plants, then pull them out and dispose of the roots and dead leaves. Remember to take them to your local recycling tip or put them in the appropriate bin if the council have provided you with one.

Perennial plants will grow again the following year and can be trimmed down and left.

It's also a time to enjoy the vegetables you planted earlier. Potatoes, carrots, runner beans, peas are all delicious when picked and cooked by you own hand!

There will still be less frequent weeding and grass cutting to contend with but hopefully the barbecue can still be put to good use.

## Winter

Earth should be dug over to allow the forthcoming frosts to break it down and kill off stray weed roots. Clean up all the rotting fallen leaves and cut down the last of the dead flower foliage.

However, you can still maintain colour by planting winter flowering plants; pansies are probably the most popular of these.

Plant bulbs ready for the Spring and seeds into small pots for the greenhouse. Keep delicate plants protected from frost by wrapping them in a fleece obtainable from Garden Centres. Move pots nearer to a sheltered wall which will keep them frost free.

## Finally...

If you are unsure of what to do, don't be afraid to ask a neighbour who seems to know what he's doing. It's a great way to socialise and most people are only too happy to give you the benefit of their experience and mistakes.

Local Garden Centres keep a stock of virtually everything you are likely to need in your garden. They also usually have a resident "expert" who will guide you in what to plant, when and where.

Don't be afraid to experiment and try new things yourself and above all...**enjoy yourself!!**

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## Energy Efficiency

Here are some handy tips to save some money (and the environment!)

- Keep your main thermostat at around 17°C your heating system will regulate itself turning the boiler on and off when the temperature in the property raises below or above the chosen temperature. Only change this setting if the property is consistently too cold/hot. This can save you up to 10% on your heating bills
- If you have thermostats on individual radiators use them to control heat in individual rooms
- Close curtains to keep heat in tucking long curtains above the radiator instead of allowing the hot air to escape behind the curtains
- Fit a shelf above a radiator to allow warm air to be recirculated
- Put tin foil behind radiators to reflect heat
- Dress to suit the weather conditions lots of thin layers are better than a couple of layers of jumpers
- Keep doors closed between rooms
- Never put warm/hot food in the fridge
- Use a toaster instead of a grill when making toast
- Defrost fridges and freezers regularly to ensure that they work to their optimum capacity
- Use lids on your saucepans when cooking as this saves time and thus energy!
- Only use the washing machine when you have a full load
- Don't leave water running when brushing your teeth
- Turn lights off when you don't need them
- Use low-wattage energy efficient bulbs



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