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The repairs and improvements handbook has been put together by staff and tenants to give you information and guidance about Brighton & Hove City Council's repair service.

This handbook includes:

- the council's responsibilities as your landlord
- your responsibilities as a tenant
- how to order repairs for your home
- how long repairs should take
- an explanation of what are planned works
- information about the steps you must take when planning your own improvements

Tenant involvement is at the heart of all the services that we provide. Our repairs partnership is made up of the council, contractors and tenants.

- Residents have a say in shaping the repair service that we deliver by:
Monitoring the service that we provide
- Being involved on making the improvements that are important to you.

Your input and feedback is important to us and you can be involved in influencing the repair service that you receive.

For further information, please contact your local residents association or the council's Resident Involvement Team RIT@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Estate Development Budget

Is there something you'd like improved in your neighbourhood?

The Estate Development Budget is a 'tenant led' budget that delivers improvements in their area. Each idea is considered by an elected panel of resident representatives and the work done can really make a positive difference to a neighbourhood.

If you have ideas on improvements for your area, contact your local resident association, e-mail the Resident involvement Team on RIT@brighton-hove.gov.uk or go to www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/edb

2. Repair responsibilities

What repairs are the council responsible for?

By law, the council has an obligation to look after the structure of your home. Repairs must be carried out to make sure that fixtures and fittings for water, sanitation, gas and electricity are safe and in working order. The council must also maintain any equipment it has installed to provide hot water and heating, and communal facilities, such as lifts and door entry phones.

We are responsible for checking repairs needed in the communal areas. We carry out regular estate inspections. However, if you see anything that needs repairing, please call the repairs helpdesk to report it. In seniors housing, tell your scheme manager about communal repairs and they will report them.

What repairs is the council responsible for?

Council responsibility	Comment
Aerials (communal)	Where installed by the council
Central heating	Gas boilers, storage heaters, radiators, hot water
Chimneys	Brickwork, replacement pots etc
Cookers	Senior Housing only
Doors and locks (external)	Except lost or stolen keys, door numbers and battery-operated door bells
Drains	Blocked drains and gullies
Electricity	Except where tenants have installed their own fittings, appliances, plugs, fuses, light bulbs and meters
Fire and smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors	Unless battery operated which are a tenant responsibility
Floors	Concrete structure and floorboards. New kitchen and bathroom flooring
Garages	Structure and garage doors only (not locks)
Gutters	Clearance and repairs to gutters and fascia boards
Immersion heaters	Repair or replacement
Lifts	
Paths	Leading to front or back doors but not patios
Pipes, water tanks and cylinders	
Plumbing and fittings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Replacement of toilets, sinks, baths, wash hand basins (including refixing brackets) ✓ Taps running continuously, tap replacement and other tap repairs ✓ Blocked toilet, bath, sink or wash hand basin Toilet not flushing properly
Roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Loose or damaged tiles, rain penetration, flashings etc
Stairs	
Walls	Rendering, brickwork, pointing and internal plastering
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Glazing (except wilful damage, which requires a

Call the repairs helpdesk on 0800 052 6140

	crime reference number) ✓ Misted or fogged windows ✓ Secure window frame ✓ Window not opening and closing ✓ Repair or replace window catches, handles, hinges and locks ✓ New window frame sills
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What repairs am I responsible for?

You are expected to make sure that your home, garden and balcony are kept safe, clean, free from rubbish, and are not neglected.

If we are told that a repair is needed due to misuse or wilful damage, you may be charged for it. This doesn't include usual wear and tear.

The table below give examples of your repair responsibilities. Please contact the repairs team if a repair is not listed, or if you are not sure who is responsible.

Exceptions are made in individual cases for vulnerable tenants, including people over pensionable age, people who are registered disabled, and seniors housing tenants.

Tenant responsibility	Comment
Battery operated smoke detectors	
Clothes lines and rotary driers	Except communal areas
Cookers	Gas and electric, including connections (gas cookers must be installed by a Gas Safe qualified engineer)
Internal decoration, including the inside of the front door	The council does not redecorate after we have carried out repair works. We do however make good and prepare surfaces ready for your decoration.
Doors (internal)	Except door frames
Fencing	Unless health & safety or communal
Floor coverings	Unless fitted by the council
Home contents insurance	You are responsible for insuring your home contents, this is not covered by the council.
Keys	Including garage keys and window keys
Plumbing and fittings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Replacement of WC seats and toilet chains ✓ Replacement of kitchen and bathroom tiles (unless fitted by the council) ✓ Replacement of plugs and plug chains
Utilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Gas ✓ Electricity ✓ Water ✓ Virgin (Cables) 	Tenant to contact supplier directly for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ gas and electricity meters (including key and card types) ✓ water meters ✓ cable television / internet

Your responsibilities as a council tenant:

- To be at home for your appointment
- To ensure clear access to the repair area

- To treat staff with respect
- To give feedback and reporting any areas where we might have fallen short, as this helps us deliver a high level of customer service.

Contents Insurance

We strongly advise all tenants and leaseholders to take out household content insurance.

Many council tenants and leaseholders believe that we automatically insure their furniture, belongings and decorations against theft, fire, vandalism or burst pipes, but this is not the case. Unfortunately, many people only realise this after the damage has been done.

We recommend [Crystal insurance](#), provided by Thistle Insurance services, insured by Allianz Insurance PLC. They offer a good choice of cover with very competitive premium rates. You can of course choose to make your own arrangements through any other insurer.

Please contact Crystal insurance directly with any questions regarding their scheme on 0845 601 7007 (or 01628 586 187 from a mobile). You can also call them if you need help filling in the form as they can complete the application process over the phone with you.

Apply via the [Crystal insurance website](#), or pick up a form from [housing office receptions](#). New tenant packs include a copy of this form. If you would like to request a Policy Document they are available upon request from [Crystal insurance](#).

Fencing

It is your responsibility to both maintain and, where necessary, replace fencing around your home.

Internal Decorating

Internal decorating is a tenant's responsibility. The council does not redecorate even after we have carried out repair work to your home. We do however, make good and prepare surfaces ready for you to decorate.

There is an internal decorating and gardening discretionary scheme which tenants in receipt of disability allowance or over 75 years may apply for. To check if you are eligible and for further details please contact the Housing Customer Services Team

Housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Telephone: **01273 293030**

What if I lose my keys or fob?

It is your responsibility to replace any lost or stolen keys. If you have lost a key or fob to a main entrance door, please contact us to purchase a replacement. We will need identification before we can issue any replacements.

If you become locked out of your home, you are responsible for regaining entry. Exceptions are made in some cases for vulnerable tenants - please contact the repairs helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 for advice.

If you would like **additional** copies of a main entrance door key, you need written consent from us, which you then need to take to either of our approved locksmiths below:

- Dockerills Ltd, 3 Church Street, Brighton
- Thomas Locksmiths Ltd, 97 Portland Rd, Hove

Call the repairs helpdesk on 0800 052 6140

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Please contact the Housing Customer Services Team who will help you

Housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Telephone: 01273 293030

Fencing

You are responsible for maintaining and repairing all fencing around you home (unless communal)

Soundproofing

The council does not install additional soundproofing retrospectively in our properties.

3. Reporting a repair

To report all repairs just call:

0800 052 6140 or 01273 294409

24 hours a day, seven days a week

You can also report a repair:

- by completing our online repairs reporting form at **www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/report-repairs**
- by e-mailing **BHCC.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk**
- by writing a letter to the Repairs Helpdesk, Housing Centre, Unit 1, Fairway Trading Estate, Eastergate Road, Brighton, BN2 4QL

Before you report a repair, please gather as much information about the problem as you can, as this helps us to order the correct repair. Our helpdesk staff are trained to help identify and raise an order for the correct repair for your home.



4. When will my repair be done?

Emergency repairs

An emergency repair is one which needs to be carried out quickly to avoid danger to you or serious damage to the building. An emergency repair will be attended to within 24 hours so please be available to give access.

Examples include:

- serious water leak
- no power in property
- no heating and hot water from boiler (November to April only)
- overflowing drains
- collapsed ceiling or roof
- ground floor window not closing
- attending a lift breakdown
- a blocked toilet (if it's the only accessible one in your home)

Routine repairs

A routine repair will be complete within 20 working days and you will be offered an appointment.

Examples include:

- anti-fungal wash down for mould on walls
- adjusting a communal door closer
- broken kitchen units
- broken paths and paving
- flashing light in communal area
- a dripping tap

Out of hours (emergencies only)

Between 5pm and 8am, we provide a service for emergency repairs only. In these cases, we will only carry out a temporary repair to stop the emergency situation or make it safe. We'll then raise a further job and make an appointment with you on the next working day, so that the repair can be completed.

Some jobs are larger than a simple repair. If this is the case, we will inform you that you are included in the 'Planned Work' programme and tell you when the work is due to start.

Please see next page for further information on planned works.

If a repair is needed due to deliberate damage, vandalism, neglect or botched DIY by any member of your household or visitors to your home, we will carry out your repair and recharge you.

Photo of a Mears ID card – All contractors visiting your home should show you ID – please ask to see ID

Meters

Utility meters are the responsibility of the supplier. If you have any issues with your meter, or meter cupboard, please contact your supplier directly

Cables

Hanging cables on houses and blocks are the responsibility of the service providers, unless they are the council's communal aerial.

5. Planned work

What is planned work?

The citywide planned work programmes include items that requires substantial repairs or replacements to the building. This is to improve the condition of our buildings both internally and externally. Both major project work and planned replacements to our buildings, as well as works to individual homes.

Communal works such as:

- Communal decorations to shared areas
- Renewal of roofs
- Window replacements
- Renewal of guttering, drainage & rainwater goods
- External decorations & repairs
- Long term repairs such as pointing and concrete repairs
- Lift replacement.

These works are being planned in programmes over the coming years to keep our buildings in repair.

Sometimes work that may seem like a simple repair, such as broken or misplaced guttering to a building or block may require scaffold. In these instances we may inspect this and decide to add the property into the planned programme and look at the whole building to see if any other works are required while the scaffold is in place. This demonstrates value for money for the council and ensures that we are meeting all of our full repair obligations using a planned approach rather than in an adhoc way.

How will I know if work is due in my area?

All planned work is based on need and the programme is subject to change.

To see when planned work is provisionally programmed for your area, have a look at our website by visiting www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hm-investment-programme, or, request a copy from the Property & Investment team on **01273 293346**

Our planned programme also includes the work required to bring your own home up to the **Brighton & Hove Standard**, such as replacement of gas boilers, rewiring, windows, external doors, kitchens and bathrooms.

What is the Brighton & Hove Standard?

This is a minimum quality standard for council homes developed in consultation with tenants. The standard is based on the government's Decent Homes Standard, with additional items above this minimum standard that have been agreed with tenants to meet local priorities.

The Brighton & Hove Standard means that your home will:

- meet the current minimum standard for housing
- be in a reasonable state of repair
- have reasonably modern facilities
- be warm and comfortable
- include other items above the national standard which have been agreed in consultation with tenants, such as a choice of kitchen style and Secure by Design front doors.

For more information on the standard go to www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/bhstandard or contact Housing Customer Services for a leaflet.

Or to find out when you are due a new kitchen or bathroom call the Property & Investment team on 01273 293346

Do I get a say in the style of improvements in my home?

Yes, you can choose the following:

- door - a choice over the style and finish
- bathroom - a choice of flooring
- kitchen - you are involved in designing the layout and have a choice of style of cupboard doors, worktops and flooring.

You will be given details on the choices available before the work begins.

What quality of work can I expect?

The council and its partners are committed to delivering quality work to your homes. We ensure that this is achieved by:

- inspecting work and monitoring quality
- monitoring performance with support of Resident Inspectors and tenant representatives
- asking you to provide customer feedback once work is complete

Further Works

Some jobs are larger than a simple repair and may require further works. Examples of this can be

- Where scaffold is required
- Where work affects the whole building and not just your home
- Where work is weather dependant e.g. roof repairs

Some works will also be subject to the statutory leaseholder consultation which will delay progress

6. Damp & Condensation.

Is Your Home Damp?

Damp in your home is a nuisance and causes mould on walls, furniture and clothes. Mould growth, if not removed, can increase the risk of respiratory conditions. Some damp is caused by condensation; we have highlighted the differences below as a guide to help you.

What is Condensation?

There is always moisture in the air in your home, even though you cannot see it. Condensation occurs mainly during cold weather. It will appear in corners and on walls, around windows or behind wardrobes and cupboards, in places where there is less or little air movement.

What is Damp?

Damp usually creates a 'tide mark' if it has come from outside sources. The main causes of damp in the home are:

- Leaking pipes, wastes or overflows
- Rain seeping through a roof where tiles or slates are missing
- Blocked or defective guttering causing an overflow of rain water
- Rising damp due to a defective damp course, debris in the cavity or slumped wet cavity wall insulation

If the damp in your home doesn't come from an outside source, then it is probably due to condensation.

Tips on How to Avoid or Minimise Condensation

Daily activities produce a lot of moisture very quickly which will remain in the air and form droplets of water, which then form on colder surfaces, such as glass. This can then lead to mould formation. If you and your family spend many hours in one room with the door closed and no window open, this will cause excessive moisture in the air. Similar to when you are in a car and the windows steam up.

Here are some handy tips to help you reduce moisture build up and minimise the risk of mould growth in your home.

- Cover pans in the kitchen when boiling
- Always ventilate bathrooms, kitchens and living areas when in use by opening windows and have the trickle vents open at all times.
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors when using these rooms as this will help prevent moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms which are often colder.
- Dry washing outside where possible and not on radiators. If you have wet clothing in the home ventilate the room by opening windows.
- Tumble dryers require outside ventilation. Even the condensing tumble dryers create some moisture, so close the door of the room that it is located and have a window open, or ajar when using.
- Keep a small window ajar when anyone is in the room for any length of time.
- Avoid putting too many things on top of cupboards and wardrobes as the air cannot circulate properly. Where possible position any furniture against internal walls.
- In cold weather, it is advisable to keep heating on for longer at lower temperatures. Keeping low background heating on all day will prevent the temperature from dropping too sharply, which makes the property more difficult to heat up again.

Treating Mould

- Try to remove and wipe down the mould when you first notice it. This needs to be managed and will not go away on its own.
- Wash down mould with an anti-fungal treatment, or bleach solution. (Always, follow the manufactures instructions.)

The only lasting way to eliminate the mould completely is to ventilate and heat your home effectively.

7. Tenant alterations and improvements

Can I carry out my own improvements?

The council allows you to make improvements to your home, but you must get written permission from us before starting. Only secure tenants can carry out improvements. If you are an introductory tenant, you need to wait until your tenancy is secure.

You do not need our permission to decorate the inside of your home, lay carpet or carry out minor improvements. You must contact us before starting all other work, including:

- laying laminate or tiled floors
- erecting a shed or greenhouse
- replacing a kitchen or bathroom
- installing a new aerial or satellite dish.

It is vital that you get our permission, as there may be health and safety issues concerning the area you plan to work on. Your home may contain asbestos which is dangerous when disturbed, so you need to contact us before doing any structural or maintenance work. Your home may have been tested for asbestos in the past and we will have that information. We may need to visit you to check for any risks.

We will always inform you whether you have permission for the work. We will normally give permission, unless the work is likely to affect the safety of the building, cause a future maintenance problem, or cause a nuisance to your neighbours.

We may attach conditions to the permission, such as insisting that the work is carried out by a competent contractor and to a satisfactory standard. We may need to inspect the work that you have carried out.

- Please be aware that we do not allow residents to attach anything to the outside of a building that has exterior cladding. Attaching anything to the cladding will damage the integrity of the building and invalidate any warranty.

Some alterations and improvements may also require planning permission or building regulation permission. You must get this in advance, as it could cost you a lot to put things right afterwards.

You can make your alteration request directly online at the council's website using the tenant alteration online form.

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/council-housing/alterations-and-improvements>

Alternatively you can speak to an advisor by calling the Housing Customer Services team on 01273 293030 who will help you.

Adaptations

If you or someone living with you has a disability there are a number of ways we can help you live more independently in your home. These include providing equipment to make daily tasks easier, adapting your home to improve access or helping you to use bathing

Call the repairs helpdesk on 0800 052 6140

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facilities, etc. To see if you qualify please contact our Access Point team: e-mail: accesspoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk phone: **01273 295555** minicom: **01273 296205**

Some small adaptations such as grab rails, lever taps and window openers can be fitted by us without a referral from an Occupational Therapist. Call the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 0526140 and they will let you know if we can install the item you need. The Repairs Helpdesk will also help if your adaptation needs to be repaired. If an adaptation needs repairing within 12 months of being installed, please tell us, as the item will still be under warranty.

What happens when I move out?

If you move, you will be expected to leave your home in a good condition. You should leave any alterations that we have given permission for in place. If we have to do any work as a result of authorised or unauthorised alterations that you have done, the cost will be recharged to you.

If you have made improvements to your home with our permission, you may be able to apply for compensation. To make a claim, you need to give us details of the improvement when you give us notice to end your tenancy. We will need to see bills for the work or, if you don't have these, tell us the cost and when the work was done. Any payment will depend on when you made the improvement, how much you have benefited from it, the cost, and its quality and condition.

Contents Insurance

We strongly advise all tenants and leaseholders to take out household content insurance.

Many council tenants and leaseholders believe that we automatically insure their furniture, belongings and decorations against theft, fire, vandalism or burst pipes, but this is not the case. Unfortunately, many people only realise this after the damage has been done.

We recommend [Crystal insurance](#), provided by Thistle Insurance services, insured by Allianz Insurance PLC. They offer a good choice of cover with very competitive premium rates. You can of course choose to make your own arrangements through any other insurer.

Please contact Crystal insurance directly with any questions regarding their scheme on 0845 601 7007 (or 01628 586 187 from a mobile). You can also call them if you need help filling in the form as they can complete the application process over the phone with you.

Apply via the [Crystal insurance website](#), or pick up a form from [housing office receptions](#). New tenant packs include a copy of this form. If you would like to request a Policy Document they are available upon request from [Crystal insurance](#).

8. Customer Care

We aim to deliver an excellent service by putting residents at the centre of everything we do. In this section, we detail the customer care you can expect from our repairs service.

Customer Feedback

- To ensure that you are happy with the service received, we may ask you to complete a customer satisfaction survey.
- Your feedback is vital in helping us to provide excellent customer service, so please do take the time to respond.
- Your responses are used to identify any service areas that need improving and to build our training programme for staff. We investigate any negative responses and make sure we put things right.

If you feel that a member of staff or trades person has not delivered the high quality service you expect from us, please call the Repairs team call centre immediately on 0800 052 6140.

What can I do if I'm not happy?

Step 1: Who do I contact if I wish to raise an issue?

We always try to get things right first time but appreciate that this does not always happen. If you are not happy, your first step is to speak to a member of staff on the Repairs Helpdesk by calling 0800 052 6140. Trained staff are there to help resolve your issues as quickly as possible and will refer your query on if necessary.

Step 2: What do I do if I am still not happy?

If you are not satisfied with our first response, you should raise the issue with our repairs team in the first instance and ask to speak to a supervisor or manager.

The staff will investigate your complaint thoroughly and may arrange for someone to visit your home in order to resolve your issue to your complete satisfaction.

Step 3: What next?

If you are still unhappy, or think what you have been told will not help, you can make a formal complaint by contacting the council's Customer Feedback Team. They can be contacted in the following ways:

visit: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/customerfeedback

e-mail: customerfeedback@brighton-hove.gov.uk

phone: 01273 291229

Call the repairs helpdesk on 0800 052 6140

Right to Repair Legislation

The Right to Repair scheme came into force in April 1994. The scheme covers small urgent repairs costing up to £250 which have to be completed within specified times.

If the repair is not completed within this time, you can ask the council to appoint a second contractor to complete the work.

If the repair is still not completed by the end of the second period, you will be entitled to compensation of £10, plus £2 a day for every day the repair remains outstanding, up to a maximum of £50.

The Right to Repair Scheme does not apply if:

- you have agreed an appointment for the repair to be carried out beyond the specified time
- you have told the council you no longer want the repair carried out
- you haven't allowed the contractor access to carry out the work

In some cases, the council may have to inspect the repair before work begins to make sure that it is covered by the Right to Repair Scheme.

If parts are required to complete the repair, the scheme allows for the specified time to be reasonably extended. All repairs should be reported to the council as normal. If you want further information about claiming compensations, please contact us.

For more information about the scheme, see the 'A Better Deal for Tenants: Your Right to Repair' booklet, which is only available online at

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/138340.pdf>

You can help us by:

- being at home for your appointment
- allowing us reasonable access to your home to carry out inspections and work
- ensuring clear access to the repair area
- treating staff with respect
- giving feedback about what we have done well and where we can improve
- telling us when you want to carry out any work in your home yourself
- giving us positive feedback when we get things right

9. Safety in your home

Gas and carbon monoxide

By law, it is essential that we inspect all gas supplies and appliances in your home within every 12 month period – this could save your life. If an appliance is poorly maintained, it can produce carbon monoxide.

All gas safety checks are a free service to tenants. When your home is due for a gas safety inspection, our gas contractor will contact you directly to make an appointment. You must allow them access to carry out the inspection. This is a condition of your tenancy agreement and, if you refuse, we may force access to carry out the inspection. If we do this, we will seek to recover any costs incurred from you.

Are there signs of carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide cannot be seen or tasted and does not smell, but it is poisonous if breathed in, even for a short time.

Carbon monoxide is difficult to detect but there are a number of ways that you can see if an appliance is faulty. **These include:**

- the boiler pilot light continually going out
- an orange or yellow flame (pilot light and gas cooker)
- a black, brown or scorched area on the appliance
- a musty smell or signs of soot

What can I do to reduce the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning?

- always allow engineers in to your home to carry out safety checks of your gas appliances
- never cover the appliance, vents or flues as they provide the air the appliance needs to work properly
- do not let anyone sleep in a room with a gas fire
- buy a carbon monoxide detector and check it regularly If you have doubts about the safety of gas appliances in your home, call the Repairs Helpdesk on 0800 052 6140 without delay.

If you do not have any smoke alarms, please contact the Fire Brigade who may be able to install one for you.

If a fire breaks out in your home, call 999 immediately and follow the advice they give you.

Legionella

What is Legionella?

Legionella bacteria are common in natural sources of water. Under certain circumstances, Legionella can be a risk and infection can occur, but this is extremely rare.

What can I do?

Call the repairs helpdesk on 0800 052 6140

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To reduce the risk, you can take the following precautions:

- if you have a shower, regularly descale and clean the shower head to protect against the risk of legionella
- if you are going on holiday or away for longer than a week, take the shower head off and place it in a bowl of diluted disinfectant or a shower head cleaning agent
- when you return, run the shower without the shower head for a few minutes and then refit it

Asbestos

There may be asbestos in your home, but it is only dangerous when it is disturbed and fibres are released into the air. This can happen when it is cut, sanded or drilled, which is why it is important that you contact us for permission before starting any improvements. If the asbestos in your home is not likely to be disturbed, we may decide not to remove it.

Asbestos could be found in:

- corrugated or flat cement roofing and wall panels
- ceiling and floor tiles
- bath panels
- textured coatings such as Artex
- boilers and flue pipes
- drainpipes and gutters

If you think that you have got asbestos in your home, please call the Repairs Helpdesk on **0800 052 6140**.

Fire

What precautions can I take?

- never leave cigarettes burning
- never smoke in bed
- keep matches away from children
- never leave the room when a hob or grill is on
- regularly check electrical appliances and their leads
 - do not overload plug sockets
- make sure you know where your door and window keys are
- if you have battery-operated smoke alarm or carbon monoxide detector, check them regularly

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