

FACT SHEET

Your new build home

We try to make sure your new home is ready for you to move into and that everything is in good working order, so that you can settle in quickly.

1. Moving in

We'll already have checked to see if anything needs repairing (we call these defects in a new home) but sometimes new homes have defects which only get picked up when someone starts living there.

When you move in, you should check everything works and is fitted okay, including:

- Baths, basins and toilets,
- Glass (windows, mirrors and shower screens),
- Fireplace surrounds,
- Kitchen fittings and appliances,
- Wall tiling,
- Carpets, floor tiling and laminated flooring.

Every new home is individually built and hand-crafted, so it's normal to find small differences in the appearance of various elements.

You should also check that:

- You've been given the correct keys for all locks, and your windows and doors open, close and lock properly.
- All services (gas, water and electricity) are connected and in working order. You should also agree meter readings with us. A meter reading will be taken when you hand your property over to us, and this should not be significantly different to the one you take when you move in.

If you find any problems, please report them to us straight away.

All of our new homes come with a National House-Building Council (NHBC) warranty or equivalent, e.g. Premier, Zurich or LABC.

2. Drying out your new home

Your property will gently settle over the first few months after it's been built. The water absorbed by the concrete, bricks, timber, plaster and other materials as it was built need to evaporate slowly and

be ventilated away. If this isn't done properly, you'll get cosmetic hairline drying cracks in the property, and it may cause mould.

Here's how to dry out your home:

- Keep a reasonably even temperature throughout the property. If you move in during the winter try not to use the central heating too much at first, to allow it to dry out gradually. Depending on how your home has been built and the weather conditions, this may take several months.
- Keep your home ventilated to allow moisture to evaporate as the structure dries out. Leave windows, or at least trickle vents (slotted vents in the window frame), open for as long as you can each day.

Efflorescence

After your home has dried out, a white deposit on walls called 'efflorescence' may appear. This is caused by natural salts coming out of the wall materials and is quite normal. It's not harmful and usually disappears over time. If efflorescence occurs on internal walls you can wipe or brush it away. If it continues for a long time internally this could indicate a water leak, so please contact us.

Reducing condensation

During the drying out process you may see condensation, which is caused by steam or water vapour coming into contact with cold surfaces. Once the building has dried out you should no longer experience significant condensation.

However, normal daily activities produce water vapour, which may cause condensation if it's allowed to spread around the home. If condensation persists it can cause mould on walls and ceilings and, in extreme cases, condensation and mould can damage clothes, bedding, floor coverings, decorations and the home itself. Ask for our guide on condensation, damp and mould for information on how to prevent this.

3. DIY

Please be careful if you decide to do DIY in your new home. There are certain types of DIY you don't need our permission for – we've detailed these below, with some handy hints on how to do a good job. For all other DIY you'll need to contact us first.

Wall fixings

The type of fixing you should use to attach items to walls depends on the construction of the wall and the weight of the item. Pictures and other light items can be hung on all types of walls using steel picture hooks or masonry nails. Always check for buried pipes and cables first using a detector (available from DIY stores).

- **Masonry (blockwork) wall:** Heavier items can be fixed using wall plugs and screws. The wall plug and screw should penetrate through the plaster or plasterboard, well into the blockwork.
- **Timber frame walls:** For heavy items such as wall cabinets or bookshelves you should find the position of the timber frame behind the plasterboard and screw into that. The vertical timber studs are normally located at 600mm (2ft) centres and can be found using a detector. If the studs are not in a suitable position it might be necessary to spread the load by screwing a piece of wood between two studs and fixing onto that.

4. Decorating

Walls

The builder will probably have painted the walls with emulsion paint. Further coats of emulsion and oil-based paints or wallpaper can be used for later redecoration, once the walls have dried out (this normally takes 9 to 12 months). Use decorators filler to make good any minor gaps and plaster cracks. Later on, if you want to remove wallpaper from a wall with a plasterboard finish, avoid scraping too vigorously or the surface may be damaged.

Ceilings

When you redecorate ceilings, Artex and other similar plastic compound finishes should never be sanded or washed. They can be lightly brushed before painting with one or two coats of emulsion. Never apply water to these ceilings until after this has been done, or the texture may be spoilt.

Woodwork

New woodwork absorbs a lot of paint or stain, so the first painting of a home may not give as good a finish as later repainting. The surface should be cleaned and prepared properly and be completely dry before painting.

5. Services in your home

Electricity

Electricity is normally supplied through an underground cable, which is connected to your electricity meter.

Cables leading from the meter are connected to your consumer unit, which contains the main on/off switch and a number of miniature circuit breakers (MCBs) protecting individual circuits. MCBs automatically disconnect the supply of electricity if one of the circuits is overloaded or if there's a fault. They can be reset by returning the switch to the 'on' position.

In addition there may be a residual current device (RCD) which provides additional shock protection. You can reset an RCD which has 'tripped' by returning the switch to the 'on' position. Check the RCD is working properly from time to time by pressing the 'test' button. If an MCB or RCD trips repeatedly, this may mean there's a fault with an appliance or the installation. Please contact us to report this.

Electricity is distributed around the home by cables, which are normally concealed in floors and walls. Cables that aren't protected by metal conduit (pipe) may be found in the following areas of the wall:

- Vertically above or below a socket outlet or switch being served.
- Horizontally either side of the socket or switch.
- Horizontally in a band within 150mm (6") of the ceiling.
- Vertically in a band within 150mm (6") of the corner of a room in each wall.

Cables may run in any position above a ceiling or under a floor.

Water

Water is supplied by the water company through an underground service pipe which is fitted with a stopvalve at the boundary to your property for the water company to use in an emergency. As it enters your home its flow is controlled by the main stopvalve, which allows you to turn off the supply in an emergency or for maintenance.

It's important you know where the main stopvalve is located. From your stopvalve, water enters the 'rising main' and is distributed around the home via a direct feed system.

Gas

If you have gas, it's brought into your home through a service pipe that terminates at the control valve by the meter. This is usually outside the building, either on

the wall or partially buried in the ground. You should have a key to open the meter cupboard so you can turn off the gas in an emergency, or read the meter. Gas is distributed to the central heating boiler and other gas appliances through pipework, which may be hidden in floors and walls.

Central heating

A hot water central heating system consists of a boiler and radiators, a pump and controls. Water heated by the boiler is pumped around the radiators through pipework that's usually hidden in the floors and walls.

Adjust the settings of the programmer to turn the heating on and off when you need it. A room thermostat and/or thermostatic radiator valves are normally provided to regulate room temperatures.

For central heating systems with a hot water cylinder, the temperature of the hot water from the taps is normally set by adjusting the cylinder thermostat.

Central heating systems with a combination boiler have no hot water cylinder. Water that comes directly from the rising main is heated in the boiler and distributed to the hot taps around the home. There should be a control on the boiler to set the temperature of the hot water from the taps.

6. Lawn Care

Try to keep off the lawn as much as possible for the first few weeks. Not doing so risks the lawn becoming quite bumpy and uneven. If you do have to go across the lawn to transport things, consider placing some boards over the new turf to use as a walkway. The lawn will need to establish and settle before letting animals loose on it or installing any children's play equipment.

Keep the new lawn well watered (normally daily, but this does of course depend on conditions), especially for the first month or so. During hot spells, or periods of drought, water early in the morning or early evening where possible. This allows the water to get to the grass roots before the sun burns it off.

Whilst the lawn needs to be kept watered, you also want to encourage nice strong, deep roots. Overwatering makes the lawn lazy – it won't grow strong, deep roots because it doesn't have to. If the lawn is permanently waterlogged, the roots will be

starved of oxygen, and go yellow. In extreme cases, such as prolonged periods of wet weather, this results in the grass being killed.

Over the first 3 or 4 weeks you should see the lawn begin to establish – the lawn will start to knit together so that you don't notice the individual turves, and the grass will start to grow. As the lawn knits together, water less frequently. It's better to water thoroughly every 2-3 days, than to water a little bit every day (doing the latter will usually mean that the water never gets through to the roots).

Don't be too hasty to mow the new lawn (although please don't wait until it becomes a jungle!). The blades of grass should be at least 25mm in height, and the lawn should look like it's knitting together well. Exactly how long this takes will depend on the weather and general growing conditions. Typically it will be around 3 weeks after laying, although it can be less in spring and early summer.

7. Reporting defects

Please contact us directly to report any defect in your home as soon as you can, so that we can arrange for it to be fixed if necessary and prevent any long-term damage. Defects shouldn't be reported to the developer.

8. End of Defects Inspection

At the end of the first 12 months, we'll contact you to arrange a visit by our Employers Agent and the Developer to check any outstanding defects in your home.

We'll agree with the Developer any outstanding work that they still need to take responsibility to fix.

If you're not home for this visit and don't tell us about any outstanding issues, we may not be able to get the Developer to resolve them, so please get in touch with us.