



# Housing Improvement Programme

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# The purpose of this guide

## **Cestria Community Housing is issuing this guide to all tenants in the Cestria Housing Improvement Programme.**

This guide explains how we are delivering the improvements promised and gives you information about the work we will be doing and how we can work together to make the improvements a success.

Please read and keep the guide in a safe place as it will help you when we notify you your property is in an improvement programme.

Please also watch the enclosed DVD. This shows some practical examples of what the work involves. If you don't have a DVD player don't worry.

When we are improving properties in your area we will make arrangements to show the DVD and explain to you what is being done and how you can help us improve your home.

We will issue updates from time to time particularly as new contractors are appointed when we move to year three onwards of the improvement programme.

If you have any questions or queries please use the contact details in Section 4 and we will be pleased to help you.



# Useful phone numbers



## **Cestria Community Housing Association Limited**

Bowes Offices  
Lambton Park  
Chester-le-Street  
Co. Durham  
DH3 4AN  
Telephone: 0800 587 0001



# Improving your home:

## Cestria Housing Improvement Programme

# Section 1

# 1 Improving your home

## What is the Decent Homes Standard?

**We want all our properties to reach the Government's Decent Homes Standard. This was the promise the Council made to tenants when you voted for transfer.**

A home is decent when it is comfortable, warm and has modern facilities. Cestria Community Housing is committed to making sure all of our properties are brought up to the Government's standard.



In many homes we will need to do works to the doors and windows, electrics and heating systems, kitchens and

bathrooms in order to bring the property up to standard.

In the first two years we are looking to fit new doors and windows to over 3,000 homes and new heating systems in over 1,000 homes. The heating programme will continue to 2012, by which time we will have fitted new heating systems to over 2,300 homes.

In 2010 we will start with our internal improvement programme. In the following three years we expect to improve nearly 2,000 kitchens and bathrooms.

Once these are done we will move onto external work and boundary improvements, such as new walls and gates, and estate improvements, such as off street car parking.

# 1 Improving your home

## **How do we know what work needs doing?**

Before the Transfer we surveyed a quarter of all homes so we have a good idea what needs doing. If your home wasn't surveyed during this time it will be surveyed in the future, so we will have accurate records of what needs to be done to your home.

If we need to survey your home we will write to you to let you know. Remember – never let anyone into your home unless they can prove their identity.

## **What you can expect: a step-by-step guide**

This sets out the different stages of the refurbishment of your home so you know what you can expect to happen and the order it will happen in. The work we will be doing is broken down into a number of different programmes over a number of years. Also your home may not need all the work doing to it. But the following will apply to all improvement programmes.

### **Step one: Letting you know**

The Board will agree the budgets for the Association, usually in February/March every year. If your home is in an improvement programme we will write to you, usually in March/early April, to let you know and to confirm what works are to be done.

### **Step two: Open Day**

Our contractors may arrange an open day so that you may come and view samples of the choices available to you, if appropriate, relating to colour and style of doors, colour of fittings, worktops and tiles.

### **Step three: Survey**

Our contractor will write to you at least six weeks before work is due to start to arrange for a surveyor and a Resident Liaison Officer to come and see you and your property.

The surveyor will do any technical measuring for the improvements to be done.

The Resident Liaison Officer will explain the work to be done and explain to you any precautions you may need to take, such as removal of curtains or blinds and rolling back carpets.



We want to do all we can to make sure we keep disruption and inconvenience to a minimum. To help us do this the contractor will ask you some questions about your family circumstances and any additional needs you have, such as whether you work shifts or whether any members of your household have any particular requirements or difficulties due to age or disability. They will also agree what extra help they can offer.

### **Step four: Written confirmation**

Following your discussions with the Resident Liaison Officer the contractor will write to you and confirm what has been agreed, the work to be done, your choices and any extra help to be offered. We will also give you an approximate date when the work will start.



# 1 Improving your home

## **Step five: Confirming the start date**

Approximately seven days before the works start you will receive a letter to confirm the exact date work will start on your home and how long we think the work may take. You will be given a freephone number for the Resident Liaison Officer and the Site Manager and, if the date you have been given is not convenient, please try and fix up a more convenient date.

The notification you get will ask you to make certain preparations for the work to begin. There are packing boxes available if you need them to move your belongings before work starts and the Resident Liaison Officer will give you more information about how to get them.

If extra help has been agreed for you, the Resident Liaison Officer will make the necessary arrangements.

## **Step six: Checking you are ready**

The day before work starts in your home your Resident Liaison Officer will visit or telephone you. This is to make sure everything is ready for them to start work.

## **Step seven: Work begins**

Our contractor will start on the day they promised. They will also have identification and will show you this.

We will keep mess to a minimum and use dust sheets or similar protection and aim to get the job right first time with no defects. If there is a problem, remember you have the freephone number of the Resident Liaison Officer and the Site Manager.

## **Step eight: Work finishes and is inspected**

After the contractor has finished working on your home they will inspect it and show you how to use any new systems they have installed.

## **Step nine: Are you satisfied?**

The contractors will leave you a questionnaire and a Cestria post paid return envelope to fill in to tell us how satisfied you are with the improvements we have made and the way the work was handled. Please help us by completing this. Any comments or suggestions you have will help us improve the service for others.

## **Questions and answers**

**We have collected questions people often ask us about the Cestria Housing Improvement Programme. We have printed some of the most common ones here, together with the answers.**

### ***Q. Will the improvement work affect my rent?***

A. No. Any work we do as part of the improvement programme does not affect your rent.

### ***Q. How long will the work take?***

A. This depends on what is being done. New doors and windows may take one to three days. A new heating system may take up to five days.

Bigger work such as new bathrooms and kitchens may take three to four weeks. When the contractor agrees what work they are doing at your home they will let you know how long it will take.



# 1 Improving your home

**Q. *How will I know what day the workmen will be starting work?***

A. The contractor will send you a letter telling you the exact start date at least seven working days before work begins. The day before work is due to begin you will receive a visit or phone call to confirm that you are ready.

**Q. *How can I be sure the workmen are genuine?***

A. The workmen will carry identification cards with photographs on. You can phone Cestia Community Housing and check if you are in any doubt.

**Q. *Who can I speak to before, during and after the work has started?***

A. Throughout the process please contact the Resident Liaison Officer on the freephone contact number you will have been provided.

**Q. *What happens if I have a problem outside of normal working hours or during the weekend?***

A. To report a problem outside of normal working hours please call **Freephone 0800 587 0001**.

**Q. *I work long hours/shifts and I won't be at home to let the workmen in. How can I arrange for workmen to get in to my home?***

A. We will ask you to make arrangements for a neighbour, friend or family member to let the workmen in. This is something you can discuss with your Resident Liaison Officer.



**Q. *We will be on holiday the day you are proposing to start work in my home. Will we miss out on the work?***

A. No. It's important you let us know and give the contractor as much notice as you can. We will always try to move the start date to fit in with any arrangements you have.

**Q. *I have a disability. Will any account be taken of this in planning the work to be done?***

A. Yes. Please let the Resident Liaison Officer know during the early discussions and the contractor will do all that they can to make sure any work done meets your needs.

**Q. *Can I change my mind about the colours and styles I have chosen?***

A. The contractor gives you style and colour choices and plenty of time to think about them. Once you have signed the form to say what your choices are, the contractor orders the materials. Once you have signed the form you may not change your choices.

# 1 Improving your home

**Q. *Do you mind if I leave my child at home whilst the workmen are there?***

A. The workmen are not allowed to work in a home where there is a child under the age of 16 unsupervised by a responsible adult. Please don't leave children at home without an adult whilst the workmen are there.

**Q. *What time do the workmen start and finish?***

A. The workmen's normal working hours are Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5pm.

**Q. *I am unable to move my furniture. Will someone be able to help me or do it for me?***

A. Please talk to your Resident Liaison Officer about this when the contractors first visit you. They will try to help all they can.

**Q. *What if the work creates rubbish?***

A. The workmen will take all rubbish away.

**Q. *If I am having my bathroom and kitchen done will I have cooking and washing facilities after the workmen have left?***

A. Yes. The workmen will re-connect services like water, gas and so on before they leave at the end of each day, and you should check they have done so before they leave. If the workmen find they can't re-connect the services they will make other arrangements for you.

**Q. *Will you show me how to use the new systems you install?***

A. Yes. When the contractor has finished all the work we will give you a demonstration of your new systems and provide instructions.

**Q. *I have small children. Will they be safe whilst the work is going on?***

A. Please keep children safe by not allowing them in areas where the contractor is working and supervising them closely when the workmen are in your home.

**Q. *I have pets and I want them to stay in the property whilst the work is going on. Is that all right?***

A. It is your responsibility to keep your pets safe. If you want them to stay in the home whilst the contractor is working, please keep them away from work areas. If you can't keep them away from work areas you should arrange for them to stay somewhere else temporarily.

**Q. *How can I prevent my belongings being damaged while work is being done in my home?***

A. The contractor will tell you where we will be working and the precautions you should take. You should pack away items in rooms where the contractor is working to keep them safe. It also helps if you are present while the contractor is working in your home. If you think any belongings have been damaged you should let the Resident Liaison Officer know as soon as possible.

**Q. *What if I am not happy with the work when you have finished?***

A. We will inspect the work and discuss it with you. If you are not satisfied we have a complaints procedure you can follow.



# 1 Improving your home

**Q. *Members of my family have breathing difficulties. Can you avoid creating dust whilst you work?***

A. It is possible that some of the work will create dust and it is very difficult to avoid this, but with your help we will try to reduce it by opening all windows and making sure doors are closed. If you are badly affected by dust we recommend you leave the property whilst we are working.

**Q. *Will you protect my carpet during the work?***

A. Yes. We always supply dust sheets or similar protective materials.

**Q. *Will the work mean that I am without a toilet at any time?***

A. If we are replacing your toilet as part of the work you will be without a toilet for a short time whilst the plumber changes the old toilet for the new one.

**Q. *My kitchen is being improved or replaced as part of the work. Will you be providing a temporary kitchen?***

A. No. During the day you will have to make other arrangements to prepare food. At the end of each working day you will not be left without running water or cooking facilities.



## Getting ready

# Section 2

## 2 Getting ready



### **Surveys and visits**

During the process of bringing your home up to the Cestria Housing Standard we are likely to visit your home several times. Before we visit we will always try to arrange an appointment with you and tell you why we are calling. We will also have let you know that your property is due to be improved so you will be expecting a visit from us.

### **Keeping appointments**

- Please reply quickly when we send you a letter asking you to confirm an appointment.
- Please do your best to keep appointments.
- Please contact us as soon as you can to let us know if you can't keep an appointment.
- Please let us in to your home when we need to do surveys and works.

## Survey

Before we start any work in your home our contractor will need to visit and take measurements for the work to be done and find out whether the work to your property is likely to involve any special requirements or create any problems.

A Resident Liaison Officer will also visit you at the same time, or after the survey, to:

- Tell you what works we propose to carry out in your home.
- Discuss with you styles and choices, such as colours for any new kitchen or bathroom fittings.
- Answer any questions you have.

The Resident Liaison Officer will also ask you about:

- The best way to contact you?
- How many people live in your home and if any of them have any health problems that could be affected by the works?
- If you or anyone in your household have a specific disability that we need to take into account in planning the works?
- If you have any difficulties in preparing your home due to age or disability?
- What arrangements will you make so that we can get in to your home when we want to start work?
- Are there any times you are likely to be away from home, for example, for holidays?
- Do you have any pets?

# 2 Getting ready

## **Our agreement with you**

Our agreement will be a written form that you and your Resident Liaison Officer will fill in during one of their visits. It lists the exact work we have agreed we will do and any choices you have made. It is likely to contain the following information:

- Your name.
- Your address.
- Your phone numbers and other contact details, e.g. email.
- A list of the work we are doing to your home.
- The choices you have made.
- Any special help that will be offered to assist you during the work.

## **Preparing for work**

We will give you at least seven working days notice of the day work is due to start. The day before work starts in your home either your Resident Liaison Officer or a member of the site team will visit or telephone you. This is to make sure everything is ready for us to start work.

What you need to do depends upon the work we are doing. The following will give you some idea:



## **Replacing Doors and Windows**

You would need to:

- Take down all curtains and blinds.
- Remove any ornaments and anything else on window sills.
- Remove any picture frames and mirrors from walls close to windows or doors.
- Clear a working space around all windows and external doors for the workmen.
- Keep staircase clear for access.
- Remove to a safe place any ornaments on nearby shelves or the floor that may accidentally get broken.
- Remove valuable objects and small appliances well away from the area we'll be working in.
- Roll back any floor covering near doors to be replaced.

## **Renewing heating systems or putting in central heating**

You would need to:

- Clear a working space around where boilers, radiators and pipe runs are to go.
- Remove to a safe place any ornaments on nearby shelves or the floor that may accidentally get broken.
- Remove valuable objects and small appliances well away from the area we'll be working in.
- Keep staircase clear for access.
- Roll back any floor covering where we ask.



## 2 Getting ready



### **New kitchens**

You would need to:

- Empty cupboards and shelves.
- Take down curtains, blinds, lampshades, ornaments and other loose fittings and fixtures.
- Remove floor coverings and any furniture from the kitchen.
- Remove fridge/freezer, washer, tumble dryer and other appliances from the kitchen.
- Remove valuable objects and small appliances well away from the area we'll be working in.

## **New bathrooms**

You would need to:

- Empty cupboards and shelves.
- Take down mirrors, curtains, blinds, lampshades, ornaments and other loose fittings and fixtures.
- Remove floor coverings and any furniture from the bathroom.
- Take down shower screens, shower poles and curtains and remove toilet roll holders, towel rails, etc.
- Remove valuable objects and small appliances well away from the area we'll be working in.
- Keep staircase clear for access.

## **Remember**

There are packing boxes available if you need them in order to move your belongings before work starts, please speak to the Resident Liaison Officer.





## Working in your home

### Section 3



business for neighbourhoods

# 3 Working in your home

## **Who will be working in your home?**

Cestria Community Housing will be working in partnership with a number of contractors during the improvement programme. We have worked closely with tenants in vetting all the contractors chosen for the quality of their customer care.

The following contractors have already been chosen and will be working with us to deliver the improvement programme.

### **Door and Window Contractors**

The Sekura Group  
12 Walton Road  
Pattinson North  
Washington  
Tyne and Wear NE38 8QA

### **Central Heating and Boiler Replacement**

Sunter Limited  
Unit 14  
Lyons Industrial Estate  
Hetton-le-Hole  
Washington  
Tyne and Wear DH5 0RH

### **Cestria Community Housing Building Services**

Bowes Offices  
Lambton Park  
Chester-le-Street  
Co. Durham DH3 4AN

# 3 Working in your home



## **Cestria Community Housing – Building Services**

Our own workforce will be doing some of the work. This may involve some of the internal modernisations, some external work to roofs, gutters and pointing and also some of the environmental work.

### **Who will you meet?**

Throughout the process of improving your home you will meet a number of staff from both Cestria Community Housing and the contractors who will do their best to help you.

### **Cestria Community Housing Technical Staff**

Cestria officers will be working alongside the contractor to make sure the improvement programme runs smoothly and all work is completed to a high standard.

If you have a problem and you are unable to resolve it with the contractor, officers from Cestria Community Housing will always try to help you reach an amicable agreement.

## Resident Liaison Officer

The Resident Liaison Officer is appointed by the contractor and will be your main contact for the work the contractor is doing. As we have different contractors working on different parts of the programme you will meet different Resident Liaison Officers during the five year programme. For example, the door and windows replacement contractor will have their own Resident Liaison Officer and the central heating contractor will have their own.

Their role is to keep you informed about the proposed works and to help you through the process. They will:

- Guide you through the process and give you information about it.
- Make arrangements with you for the works to start.
- Keep you informed about day-to-day matters to do with the works either by visiting you or by phone.
- Talk to the workmen on your behalf about any problems or concerns, record them and make sure someone is dealing with them.

## Site Manager

All contractors will have a site manager whose role is to organise the particular work to your home. They will also look at health and safety, the quality of work done and make sure they do their best to deliver to meet deadlines.

Officers from Cestria Community Housing will work closely with the Site Manager in planning the work to be done to your home and make sure all work meets the required standard.



# 3 Working in your home

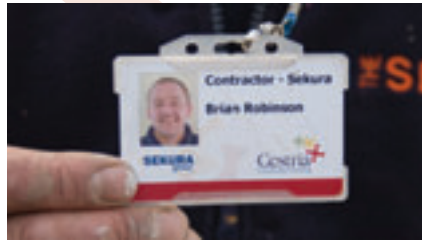
## Tradespersons

The tradespersons are skilled staff who do specialist jobs. These will include:

- Door and window installers.
- Heating and gas engineers.
- Electricians.
- Plumbers.
- Joiners.
- Decorators.
- Floor layers.

## How to recognise genuine staff

Everyone we employ to work on your home will carry official identification cards with photographs on them. They also wear high-visibility jackets that display Cestria Community Housing and their own companies' logos. Don't forget to check the identification cards of staff before letting them in to your home.



If you have concerns about any visitor saying they work for us, or if you would feel happier double-checking that it is safe for you to let the staff member in, note the phone number you will find on the identification card, close the door and phone the number.



A genuine member of staff won't mind waiting while you do this. The advisor you speak to on the phone will ask you if the photograph on the card looks like the visitor and they will also ask for the visitor's name, job title and identification number.

They will check the visitor's details against our records whilst you are on the phone.

If you are in any doubt about the visitor's identity, don't let them into your home.

## **Working with you in your home**

By working together we can reduce disruption whilst we are in your home. We understand you expect the highest level of service from us. At the same time there are things you can do that will help us to make the project a success.

# 3 Working in your home

## Standards of behaviour

All contractors working in your home have agreed to a Code of Conduct. These standards of behaviour are there to make sure we treat you and your home with respect.

As well as treating you with respect, our staff and contractors would like to work in an environment where they are treated with the same consideration.

Please behave considerately towards them when they are in your home.

A good working relationship between our staff and customers produces the best results for everyone.

We have a compliments and complaints procedure in place both for customers and contractors so that both parties have some means of airing their problems and asking for help to find solutions.

## What you can expect from us

Cestria Community Housing has agreed a Code of Conduct with tenant representatives and this sets out the standards and expected behaviour from Cestria Community Housing staff, contractors and service providers working on behalf of the Association.



## **A commitment to our customers**

In all our dealings with customers we will:

1. Let customers know when we are coming and keep any appointments we have made.
2. Show and/or display identification and if the customer has any doubt as to our identification we will not seek to gain entry.
3. Treat all customers with respect and always follow the Association's equality and diversity policies.
4. Always wear clean, smart and suitable attire appropriate for the work to do. If clothing has a company logo we will make sure the logo is clearly displayed.
5. If working inside and our footwear is dirty, we will remove our shoes and/or wear suitable protective over footwear.
6. Be polite at all times. If we are subject to any abuse or offensive language we will not engage in responding and we will leave the dwelling but will report the matter to a senior officer/client representative.
7. Make sure the customer understands the purpose of the visit and fully explain any choices and/or options they may have and leave an agreed signed copy with the customer.

# 3 Working in your home

## Working in customers' homes

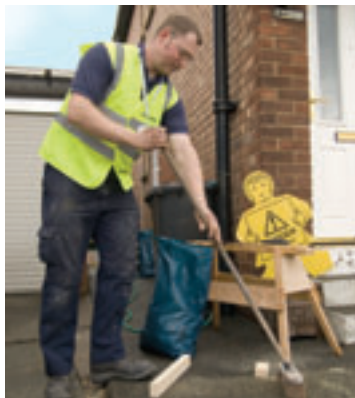
We will treat all our customers and their homes with respect. When we are working in customers' homes we will:

1. Give the customer the agreed notice of when we intend to arrive and advise on any precautions customers may need to take including the removal of curtains or blinds and the creation of workspaces.
2. Advise customers of the support that is available if due to age or infirmity they are unable to prepare for our visit.
3. Confirm the customers' choices and explain what we are doing and how long the work is expected to take.
4. Park all vehicles considerably and always use the correct health and safety warning signs where relevant.
5. Use dustsheets, or other suitable forms of protection whenever a mess is likely to be made and we will clean up properly and promptly after we have finished our days work and will arrange for all bulky items to be collected the same day.
6. Not smoke in a customer's home or garden, including any part of a sheltered accommodation scheme.
7. Not use our customer's kitchen or toilet facilities without permission.
8. Provide our own heat and power to carry out the required work.



9. Not use a radio or any other media device within the customer's home.

10. Maintain essential services such as electricity, gas and water for as long as is possible and in the event that a service or services need to be terminated for a short time we will give the customer prior notice this is going to happen.



11. Not leave external doors open unless necessary and we will close internal doors whenever practical to avoid draughts and the spread of dust.

12. Not use the customer's telephone, and will ensure that any mobile ring tone on a personal phone is not inappropriate or offensive.

13. Not store materials within a customer's home and will make sure no home is left open to the elements at the end of the working day.

14. Make sure no customer at the end of the working day is left without a supply of electricity and water for washing and a useable toilet.

15. Not leave any unfinished works without fully explaining to the customer why and when they will be complete.



# 3 Working in your home

## Ensuring quality

Quality is important to every aspect of our improvement programme. We will:

1. Keep customers informed of progress with the work we are doing.
2. Ensure the customer has a named point of contact if there are any concerns over the quality of the work being done and a 24 hour emergency freephone number in the event of emergencies arising.
3. Ensure that all work is completed in accordance with the specification and to the standards required.
4. Report any damage caused to property or injury to any individual during the works to the client representative.
5. Ensure operatives can maintain contact via radio/telephone/data transfer system or other authorised means of communication with a senior officer/supervisor at all times of the working day in order to ensure speedy instruction if necessary.
6. Apologise to the customer if things go wrong, and explain how we are going to correct it. We will ensure any problems are quickly resolved on site or, if this is not possible, reported to the relevant person.
7. Report any follow-on works that may be needed and will ensure a return visit is arranged promptly.





### **How you can help us whilst we are in your home**

- Please let us in to your home when we come to do works.
- Please make sure there is a responsible adult present to supervise children under 16 whilst we are in your home.
- Please keep your pets and children away from areas we are working in.
- Please be considerate towards our workmen.
- Please be understanding and patient if there is disruption and things don't go to plan.
- Please fill in and return the questionnaire we give you to tell us what you think of the quality of the work we have done.

# 3 Working in your home

## Health and safety and fire

Please make sure that you and your family take the following health and safety precautions whilst we are working on your home:

- Supervise children and don't let them play near areas of work.
- Don't leave babies in prams near areas of work.
- Don't leave children sleeping or playing unsupervised in upstairs rooms whilst work is in progress.
- Keep pets out of harms way whilst work is in progress.
- Watch out for holes and things you can trip over, for example, floorboards, extension leads and so on.
- Follow any safety advice the workmen or your Resident Liaison Officer give you.

If you have any concerns about safety contact your Resident Liaison Officer immediately.

## Fire

Remember fire safety while we are working in your home:

- Make sure that there is a clear way out available for you, your family and the workmen at all times.
- Never remove or tamper with any fire extinguishers that have been left in your home.
- Never try to put out a fire yourself.
- If there is a fire, leave the property immediately and stand across the street directly in front of your home.
- If there is a fire, dial 999 and ask for the Fire Service.
- If there is a fire, contact your Resident Liaison Officer after calling the Fire Service.
- Don't return home until you are told by the Fire Service that it is safe to do so.

## Report accidents

If you have an accident whilst we are working in your home, please contact your Resident Liaison Officer as soon as possible.

## Reducing inconvenience and disruption

When our workmen leave your home at the end of the day, you should be able to get gas, water and electricity and you should be able to secure the property.

If we are doing work to put central heating or a new boiler in, or a new kitchen and/or bathroom please help us by doing a few checks before our workmen leave your property. Check that:

- You have hot water.
- The gas supply is on.
- The electricity supply is on.
- Your central heating works.
- Fridges and freezers are plugged in.
- Your cooker is re-connected.
- You are able to shut and lock your doors and windows.



If after the workmen have left, you find that you are without services like gas or water, or that appliances have not been re-connected, please contact your Resident Liaison Officer immediately.

# 3 Working in your home



## Electrical faults

If your property is being re-wired we will be fitting a new consumer unit which will include a residual current device (RCD) and a time delay trip.

If the RCD trips out after we have re-wired your property, it is likely that the fault is in one or more of your appliances rather than the wiring.

The RCD can also trip out if an appliance is not working properly, for example if one ring on an electric cooker isn't working. The only solution to this problem is to replace or repair the appliance.

If your electrics continually trip out we will send an electrician to you to find out what the fault is.

## **Damaged or missing property**

If anything goes missing whilst we are working on your home, please check carefully that you haven't mislaid it before reporting the matter.

If, after a careful search, you can't find the missing item, please report it to your Resident Liaison Officer. If you are sure the item has been stolen you should report it to the police. At this point we will stop working in your property until the matter has been dealt with.

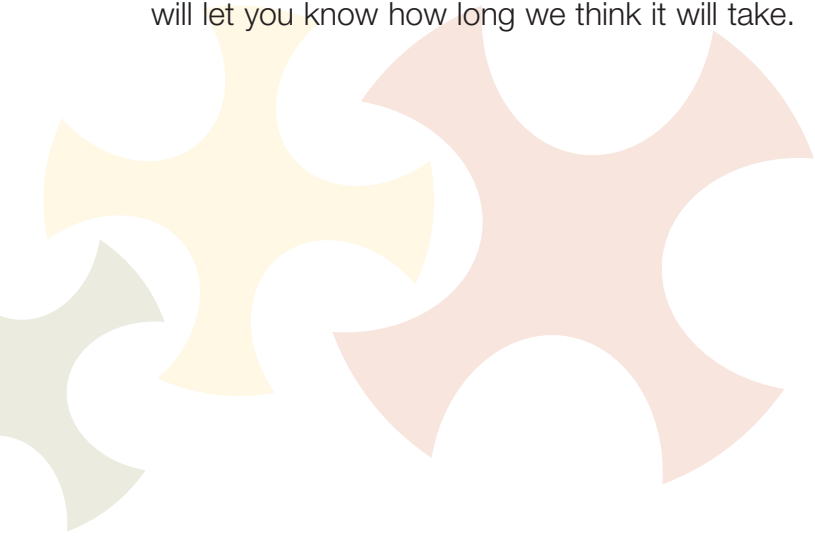
If any of your belongings are damaged during the work, keep them. Don't throw them away or leave them outside. Report the damage to your Resident Liaison Officer. Please remember protecting your personal property is your responsibility.



## 3 Working in your home

### **How long will we be working in your home?**

This depends on what is being done. New doors and windows may take one to three days and new heating systems may take five days. Bigger works such as new bathrooms and kitchens may take three to four weeks. When we agree what work we are doing at your home we will let you know how long we think it will take.





## Care and maintenance

### Section 4

# 4 Care and maintenance

This information will help you care for the new fixtures, fittings and appliances you may have had installed as part of the refurbishment of your home.

If we have installed any new fixtures or fittings we should have given you the manufacturer's instructions to all your new appliances. These contain information on how to use and care for them.

For instructions on how to use and care for your boiler or your electrical consumer unit please look at the manufacturers guides.

## **General care and maintenance**

This following contains guidance on how

- New doors and windows.
- Radiators.
- Smoke alarms.
- Positive Ventilation Units.
- Electric fires.
- Kitchens.
- Bathrooms.
- Showers.
- Tiles.
- Floors.

can be kept in good condition so you can continue to enjoy the improvements done for many years to come.

## New doors and windows

You should:

- Clean frames with warm soapy water.
- Do not use abrasives or detergents.
- Do not fix anything directly to doors or frames using screws or nails.
- Do not paint doors or windows.

## Radiators

### Controlling the heat

If you have had a new heating system you may find that your new radiators have Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRV).

You can use the TRV to control how much heat the radiator gives off.



- Set the temperature by gently turning the head of the TRV to the left or the right.
- When the TRV senses that the room has reached the temperature you set, the radiator will cool down. This doesn't mean there is a problem; it is just the TRV controlling the temperature.

# 4 Care and maintenance



## Caring for your radiators

- Wash radiators with warm soapy water. Don't use abrasive powders or scourers which may scratch the surface.
- Don't paint your radiators.
- Take particular care of radiators in areas where they might get wet, as knocks against the finish of a steel radiator can lead to surface rusting.
- Don't cover the TRV head with curtains or furniture.
- Turn the head of the TRV to the highest number setting when the heating system is off during the summer months. This helps the system start up again in the winter.
- Don't adjust any other valves or fittings on the radiator.

## Smoke alarms

Your smoke alarm has been fitted with a rechargeable battery to act as a back-up in the event of the electricity supply cutting out.

## Check your smoke alarm is working

We recommend you check your smoke alarm is working at least once a week.

- If you see a green light it means your smoke alarm is working.
- You will also find a button marked 'test' on your alarm. Press the test button for up to 10 seconds to make the alarm sound.

A red light behind the test button or on the alarm's cover will flash while the alarm is sounding. The alarm will stop when you let go of the button.

- **Don't test the smoke alarm with smoke or a naked flame.**



## Extractor fans

As part of the works when having a new bathroom and kitchen fitted, we may also fit extractor fans or other forms of ventilation. These will help:

- Combat condensation.
- Eliminate mould.
- Stop steaming windows.
- Remove musty smells.
- Improve air quality.

# 4 Care and maintenance

## Electric fires

Before cleaning electric fire please turn off the electricity supply to it.

For more guidelines on cleaning and maintaining your electric fire please look at the manufacturers instructions.

## Kitchens

### Units, doors and drawer fronts

- Tighten any hinge screws that become loose to stop doors taking too much strain.
- Don't place heavy objects on partly opened doors or drawers as this can damage them.
- Don't place electric kettles and steamers directly below wall units as that increases condensation on them.
- Clean units, doors and drawer fronts with warm water and mild detergent using a damp cloth. Dry them by wiping with a clean dry cloth. This will help keep your kitchen units in a good condition. Avoid using abrasive cleaning products or strong chemicals.

### Worktops

- Don't use abrasive cleaners or strong chemicals on your worktops as they may discolour and damage the surfaces. Clean them with water and a mild detergent. Use a cream cleaning product or a similar non-abrasive cleaning product to remove stubborn stains.
- Use a chopping board instead of chopping and cutting directly on the worktops to avoid damaging them.
- Don't place electric kettles and steamers on worktop joints.

- Wipe up any spills immediately with a soft cloth, especially around cut-outs and joints.
- Don't place hot pans directly onto the worktop surface.

## **Bathrooms**

### **Basins, baths, showers and taps**

- Clean your bathroom suite with warm soapy water or cream cleaner. This will help keep your bathroom in good condition and reduces the build-up of limescale. Using mild bathroom limescale remover won't damage surfaces as long as you follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Cleaning chemicals, paint stripper, nail varnish remover, household bleaches, perfume, aftershave and strong disinfectants can all damage bathroom surfaces so please be careful when using them.
- Don't use abrasive powders and scourers to clean surfaces.
- Rinse the bath and sink after using them as pools of soap or shampoo can cause permanent stains.
- Don't leave taps to drip as this may cause limescale to build up.

### **Toilets and cisterns**

- Don't use bleach or strong cleaners in the cistern as they may cause damage.
- Don't leave bleach or strong cleaners overnight in the toilet bowl or cistern.
- Never mix different chemicals in the toilet or cistern. They may react with each other and lead to a build-up of poisonous gases.



# 4 Care and maintenance

## Shower

For instructions on how to run the shower please look at the manufacturer's guide.

Please consider the following when using your shower:

- Don't use the shower if your water pipes are frozen, or you think they are frozen. Wait for your pipes to thaw out.
- Don't use the shower if the spray-head or hose is damaged.
- Don't restrict the flow of water out of the shower by placing the spray-head in direct contact with your body.
- Turn the shower off if the water stops flowing.

Please note that if you turn the shower on immediately after stopping it, a build-up of hot water may gush out suddenly.

## Tiles

### Cleaning ceramic wall tiles

- Remove any dirt or grit with a dry cloth first.
- Wash tiles with warm soapy water.
- Rinse tiles with clean water.
- A final wipe down with a soft dry cloth will bring back the shine.
- Don't use abrasive powders and scourers as they may scratch the tiles.

### Cleaning between the tiles

Over a period of time the areas between the tiles may become discoloured. Use grout cleaner to remove dirt and stains.



## Floors

- Please take care when you move any furniture or appliances like washing machines, freezers or cookers, as they can scrape and damage the floor surface. We recommend you put plastic castor cups under any chair legs and heavy appliances when moving them to avoid damage.
- We recommend that you use felt pads or something similar under furniture such as dining room chairs and table legs because frequent movement of chairs across the floor may cause scratch marks.
- Your flooring can be damaged by pointed heels, sharp items and hot objects such as saucepans.
- Mop up any spills on floors immediately to help prevent accidents.

# 4 Care and maintenance

## Cleaning floors

- Sweep up any grit or dirt.
- We recommend using a soft-bristle brush on floors.
- Don't use strong detergents, harsh abrasive powders, wire wool scouring pads or scrubbing brushes on the floor, as they may damage it.
- Don't use polish on your floors as this will affect the slip-resistant surface.
- Always rinse the floor after cleaning with clean warm water.
- Allow the floor to dry before walking on it.

## Stains

The following items may stain your new flooring:

- Shoe polish.
- Hair dye.
- Wax crayons.
- Animal mess.
- Some ointments for animals.
- Bitumen or tar from newly resurfaced roads and pathways.
- Brightly-coloured foods, for example ketchup.

## Rubber staining

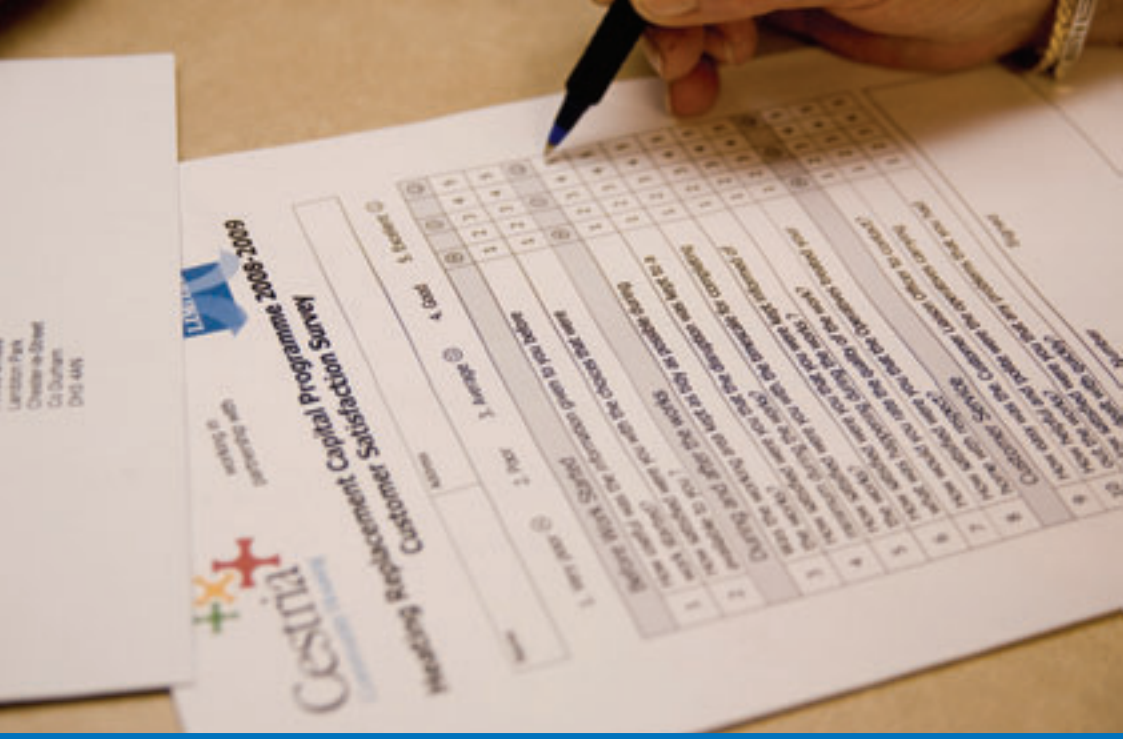
Some rubbers used in backings for rugs and mats, protective feet for stools, wheels for trolleys as well as some shoes and slippers can permanently stain your floor.

- To remove stubborn stains, you should rinse the stained area with clean water and then use a floor-cleaning product.
- Do not use strong detergent, bleach, pine gel products or an abrasive cleaner on the affected area as this may damage the surface.

## Contact us

If you have any difficulties operating, cleaning or maintaining the new items in your home please contact us on **Freephone 0800 587 0001**.





# Comments, compliments and complaints

## Section 5

If you have been pleased with any aspect of Cestria Community Housing Improvement Programme please let us know so that we keep on getting it right.

If something has gone wrong, please tell us about it straight away. We will do our best to put things right.

## **The complaints procedure**

If you want to complain about any part of the process or if you have any issues or concerns please raise them immediately with the Resident Liaison Officer. This should enable a speedy resolution. The Resident Liaison Officer will listen to and record your concerns and work with you to try to solve the problem.



If the Resident Liaison Officer dealing with your complaint can't solve the problem there and then, they will get back to you within two working days of your complaint.

The Resident Liaison Officer will focus on finding a solution to your complaint as quickly as possible and explain what is proposed. If you are unhappy with the solution offered at this stage you will have the opportunity to make a formal complaint to the Association and the Resident Liaison Officer will help you do this.

# 5 Comments, compliments and complaints

Cestria Community Housing has a three stage complaints procedure:

## **Stage one**

If you make a formal complaint it will be passed within two working days to the relevant manager of Cestria Community Housing, who will investigate the complaint you have made. They will talk to you and the contractor and give you a written response within 10 working days.

If you are still not satisfied with our answer you will need to let us know why and your complaint goes to stage two which means that it will be passed to a Director of the Association who will review what has happened so far.

## **Stage two**

If you are still not satisfied a Director of the Association will look to see why you feel the issue is not resolved, check that we dealt with your complaint correctly and that the solution or answer we offered is fair and reasonable.

We will write to you to let you know the result of the review of the complaint within 10 working days of you asking for a stage two review.

## **Stage three**

If you are still not satisfied with our response you can ask for a review by a panel of Board members. This will usually be held within 30 days.

If, after stage three, you are still not happy with our response, you must write to the Independent Housing Ombudsman, an independent person who investigates complaints about Housing Associations.



The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are below.

Housing Ombudsman Service  
81 Aldwych  
London  
WC2B 4HN

Tel: 020 7421 3800

Lo-Call: 0845 7125 973

Minicom: 020 7404 7092

Fax: 020 7831 1942

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

# 5 Comments, compliments and complaints

## **Giving feedback**

Your feedback is very important to us. It helps us to shape the way we deliver our services.

### **How did we do?**

When we complete any work to your home the contractor will leave a customer satisfaction form and a pre-paid envelope. This will be returned to Cestria Community Housing and not the contractor.

We would like your honest opinion on how we and the contractor have managed the improvements to your home. This will help us improve our service for other tenants.

### **Got a comment, compliment or a complaint?**

If you would like to comment on our service, compliment particularly good service you have received or make a complaint you can do so by:

Phoning Cestria Community Housing on  
Freephone 0800 587 0001

Emailing Cestria Community Housing on  
[enquiries@cestria.org](mailto:enquiries@cestria.org)

Writing to Cestria Community Housing at  
Bowes Offices  
Lambton Park  
Chester-le-Street  
Co Durham DH3 4AN



**We are committed to providing fair opportunity  
to access information.**

**If you would like information in another language  
or format, please call us on  
Freephone 0800 587 0001.**

**Also available in:**



Visual impairment formats



**[www.cestria.org](http://www.cestria.org)**