

Defects and repairs

Shared Ownership Homes



Welcome to your new home

Your property has been built to a very high standard and we've inspected it thoroughly – but sometimes there may be defective items which only become apparent once you've moved in.

This guide explains what is, and what isn't a defect item, and how to report defect items to us. It also gives an outline of repairs which are your own responsibility.

Please read this information carefully before reporting any defects to us.

Make sure you also read the Home User Guide and Welcome Pack you received when you moved in, and keep them in a safe place. These contain lots of useful information and the instruction manuals for many of the systems, appliances and controls installed in your home.

Remember, as a shared owner, you are responsible for maintaining and repairing your home. Your lease explains your obligations and responsibilities, and ours.

If you have any questions, you can contact our Customer Service Centre (CSC) **24** hours a day, **365** days a year, or visit our website at www.riverside.org.uk



Defects Liability Period

Your home is covered by a Defects Liability Period with the builders from the date it was handed over to us. The date this cover runs out for your property is in your welcome letter.

During the Defects Liability Period, you can report any defects to us and we will have them rectified by the builder. This is separate from the longer Building Warranty on your property. A copy of your Building Warranty is in your Welcome Pack.

Not defects

There is a legal definition of what classes as a 'defect'. There are also parameters and tolerances set out by the National House Building Council (NHBC) which define what is and what isn't a defect.

Not all issues with new properties are considered defects. Our CSC can help you identify whether something is a defect or not, so contact them if you are not sure.

If you report a defect item, sometimes we may need to send details to the builder before knowing whether it is a defect or not. If the item you report is not a defect, we will explain why. Usually this is because the issue falls within NHBC acceptable tolerances. We've included some details of these tolerances in this guide, but they can also be found on the NHBC website.

Examples of what is not a defect

Items which are not classed as defects and therefore your own responsibility to put right include:

- Issues caused by misuse or damage, even if accidental
- Decorating and gardening
- Normal shrinkage or normal condensation due to the property 'drying out'
- Blocked toilets or drains – at the time of handover a CCTV survey of the drains is carried out. Any blockage is therefore likely to be due to a 'foreign object' such as wipes or nappies
- General wear and tear, or damage arising from failure to maintain the property
- Anything reported after the Defects Liability Period has ended

More information is on our website at www.riverside.org.uk

Towards the end of the Defects Liability Period, an independent inspector will arrange to visit your property to identify any outstanding defects and agree with you that you are satisfied with any rectifications.

Any structural issues have a longer warranty, and would be dealt with separately.

The defects process

When you report a defect to us we will log it, give it a priority, and pass it to the builder. The builder will then contact you to arrange access to assess and fix the problem.

The priority of the job will depend on the defect type. For example, a security issue would be treated more urgently over something like a dripping tap. If the builder needs to return at a later date with parts, they will make a temporary repair or make things safe on their first visit.





How to report a defect

You'll need to give as much information as possible about the issue and we'll ask you any questions we need to. We may ask you to provide photos of the defect to help us assess what work is needed and so a correctly qualified person visits you, with the right equipment.

Please report defects directly to our Customer Service Centre, not to the builder's site team or any other member of staff. It's important we monitor and keep correct records of all defects, and that only work we authorise is carried out.

Our Customer Service Centre team are also trained to solve problems while you are on the phone, so they may be able to help with something straight away, for example how to re-pressurise your boiler. They can also explain how to minimise any damage while you wait for the builder to visit.

How soon a defect will be resolved

When you report a defect to us, we will give you a timescale of when you can expect to hear from the builder. If you don't hear from the builder or their contractor within the timescale, please call our CSC again so we can follow it up. Please only call again after the advised response time has passed, or if the problem gets worse.

End of Defects Liability Period

After the Defects Liability Period has ended, anything that goes wrong is a repair, not a defect. You are responsible for the maintenance and repair of the inside and outside of your property, as detailed in your lease.

We will continue to maintain any shared areas such as landscaping and communal lighting which you pay for through your service charge.

The quickest way to report a defect is to our Customer Service Centre on 0345 111 0000.

Defects

Here we have listed some of the most common defect items in new homes, along with some helpful information.

Boilers

Please refer to the manufacturer's manual you were given when you moved in to your new home. This will tell you the type of boiler you have and how to operate it, including adjusting the water and heating temperature, and programming the timer. The boiler is usually located in your kitchen and against an external wall, so the flue can vent outside.

—If you have no heat or hot water, check your boiler is switched on. Usually a fault code will be shown on the boiler display, so you should check your manual first and follow the instructions.

—If you need to re-pressurise your boiler, check the manual for instructions.

If you still cannot fix the issue, or if your boiler requires a key to re-pressurise it and you are having difficulties, please report it as a defect to us.

Remember it's important that you service your boiler once a year along with your annual gas safety check. This is your own responsibility. To maintain your boiler's manufacturer's warranty, you must use a company who is accredited by the boiler supplier. Contact the boiler supplier for a list of accredited service engineers in your area.

Brickwork

Brickwork is not uniform and there will always be some variation in colour and sometimes texture between the bricks.

Don't worry if you see white marks on the external brickwork. This is called efflorescence and is a natural process the bricks go through where the salt from within can come to the surface during changing weather conditions. It's best left as it is, but you can remove it with a dry brush if required.

You may see airbricks in the external brickwork of the building, which have holes to help prevent a buildup of moisture in your property. It's important you don't block these, so keep them clear from any obstructions and rubbish, and take care not to plant shrubs or flowers against them.

Some cracking can happen to external brickwork as part of the normal drying out process. Cracking less than 15mm in bricks, or 5mm in mortar is considered normal. If cracking in your brickwork or the mortar is more than this, please report it to us as a defect.

Condensation

Condensation is a buildup of moisture in the air, which can sometimes lead to mould. To prevent this, you should:

- Switch on extractor fans when using the bath or shower and when cooking.
- Dry clothes outside as much as possible – if you need to dry clothes inside, open windows where you can.
- Open windows when appropriate for ventilation.
- Make sure the ‘trickle vents’ on your windows are open.
- Don’t put furniture flat against walls.
- Don’t overfill wardrobes, cupboards or under stairs spaces.
- Avoid storing items in your loft space.
- Use a dry cloth on window boards and walls to soak up any moisture.

Occasionally condensation will appear between the glass in double glazed windows. If this happens during the Defects Liability Period, please report it to us. After the Defects Liability Period has ended, check the window warranty in your Home User Guide.

Doors, windows and locks

Your windows and door are fitted with security locks, but there may not be one fitted on designated fire escape windows, to make sure you can exit your property quickly in case of an emergency. Do be aware that fire escape windows tend to open wider than standard windows, as a safety measure.

If your windows or doors won’t open, close or lock easily, it’s often a case of the materials expanding or contracting, and is nothing to worry about. Report this to us if it becomes a problem.

Damp proofing

Your new home has a damp proof course fitted to help protect it from rising damp. You may be able to see the black membrane between the external brickwork, usually one or two bricks up from the ground. This is normal and is designed to stop water seeping upwards.

It’s important that you don’t ‘bridge’ the damp proof course by storing items against external walls, so do not pile up rubbish, plant shrubs or add a rockery against the building’s external walls.

Drainage

Minor drain blockages can be cleared using a plunger or liquid pipe un-blocker from a DIY shop. Remember you should not flush any items down the drain such as nappies or toilet wipes.

If your drains block within the first seven days of moving in, please report this to us. Any defects within the drainage system usually become apparent within the first week your property is lived in.

If the builder comes out to unblock a drain and the cause is found to be because of your misuse, you may be charged for clearing the blockage.

Driveways

Driveways are designed for a family sized car so you should avoid putting anything bigger or heavier on it.

If weeds become a problem, use a normal weed killer and follow the instructions on the bottle.

In icy conditions, spread some salt or grit. To clean the driveway, use water and a brush.

Electrics

If you have an electrical fault in your home, you should first check the consumer unit, also known as the fuse box.

If a circuit has 'tripped', you will see one or more of the switches will have turned itself to the 'off' position. Each switch relates to a different electrical circuit in your home, such as lights or power.

If this has happened, it is most likely because there is a faulty appliance or an over loaded socket in that particular part of your home. You should turn everything off in the affected area, flip the fuse switch back to the 'on' position and turn on each appliance again one by one. The electrics should trip again when you turn on the appliance causing the problem. Often you may just need to change a light bulb or a fuse which has blown in an appliance plug. If it turns out to be one of your own appliances that is causing the circuit to trip, it is your own responsibility to fix it.

If the circuit trips again straight away or it happens regularly, please report this as a defect to us.

For faulty light fittings, always check the bulb and reset the fuse box before reporting it as a defect.

For security, fire or smoke alarms, check the fuse box and instruction manual first, before reporting an issue as a defect.

If you experience a fault with an appliance which was already installed in your home, such as an electric oven, you should contact the manufacturer if it is still under warranty.

Extractor fans

You should use extractor fans whenever you are using the bath, shower or cooking. This will reduce the risk of condensation and in turn, damp and mould.

To clean bathroom extractor fans, you can run a vacuum over the fan now and again, but make sure you turn the power off at the fuse box first.

For cooker hood extractors, check the instruction manual for maintenance details. You will occasionally need to change the filter.

If an extractor stops working, check it's turned on and check the fuse box hasn't tripped before reporting it to us as a defect.



Fencing

The upkeep of any fencing is your own responsibility. We recommend treating fences every couple of years with suitable products from a DIY store to keep them in good condition.

Flooring

If you fit your own carpets or flooring with a thicker than average pile, ask the supplier to measure your doors to make sure they will still open once the carpet is fitted. If the doors need adjusting, we recommend you ask the flooring supplier to include in their quote the removal, shaving and rehang of the doors.

You should find that standard pile carpets will fit under internal doors easily. Doors that have been adjusted to accommodate flooring you have bought yourself may not be considered as part of the defects process.

You may want to move your furniture around from time to time to prevent marking and indentations, or place floor protectors under furniture legs. Floor protectors such as mats are a good way to protect flooring in heavy traffic areas, like hallways and near external doors. Avoiding wearing outdoor shoes indoors can also help extend the life of your flooring.

We recommend regularly vacuuming, mopping and using a degreasing product on floorings as appropriate, and cleaning any spillages quickly to avoid slip hazards and damage.

Gardens

It is your own responsibility to look after lawns, shrubs or trees on your property, including watering and preventing damage from pets.

If you are adding plants to your garden, consider the size shrubs and trees will grow to and make sure they are appropriate for the size of your garden. Roots can affect drainage, and climbing plants or plants too close to external walls can bridge the damp course, causing damp inside your home. Paving will reduce the speed water can drain away whilst grass or planted areas will help with drain-ing.

If your garden gets waterlogged in heavy rain, it should drain away naturally in a few days. If the waterlogging is within 2 metres of your home, please report this to us.

Gas safety

You will have been given a copy of the current gas safety inspection certificate in your Home User Guide if you have gas appliances in your home.

You should have your gas appliances serviced once a year by a qualified Gas Safe registered engineer and always have a valid gas safety certificate. If you don't do this, you could be putting yourself at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, or risk of gas leaks that could cause an explosion.

If you smell gas at any time you should call the National Grid immediately on **0800 111 999**. They will come and investigate free of charge.

Guttering and downpipes

It is your own responsibility to keep gutters clear, so you should check them once a year in a safe manner and in good weather. Preventing a buildup of leaves and debris will make sure gutters properly drain away rain water, which helps prevent brickwork damage and damp.

If your guttering splits, comes apart or is leaking during the Defects Liability Period, please report this to us.

Hairline cracks and nail 'pops'

Minor cracks in plaster are common in all new homes and are not structural. You may also notice nail pops, where the plaster is slightly raised, which is also common in new build properties. Both of these may happen as your new home 'settles in', where moisture within the building materials is drying out.

Any cracks smaller than 4mm wide on plaster above the stairs, and smaller than 2mm wide anywhere else in your home will be your own responsibility to rectify and will not be treated as a defect. This is simple to do, and you can find products and advice in most DIY shops.

To reduce the amount of cracking, refer back to the information about condensation, and your Home User Guide, to reduce any moisture inside your home.

The time it takes for your property to fully dry out depends on a number of things, so we recommend you don't paint or put up wallpaper during the first 12 months. After that time, we recommend you fill in any cracks or nail pops before you start to decorate.





Hot water

Your bath is fitted with a blending valve to prevent the water exceeding 48 degrees centigrade. This is a Building Regulations requirement which we must comply with. The regulation is to prevent scalding and is not a defect.

Although it is not recommended, you can adjust the blending valve to obtain hotter water. Doing this will however void any defects repair responsibilities to the plumbing.

Loft space

Your loft space is not designed to provide storage, its function is to provide ventilation and insulation only.

Leave your loft hatch closed to help keep your home warm and assist with the property settling in and drying out. Any items placed in the loft will compress the insulation and affect its thermal properties which can create cold spots on the ceiling, leading to condensation patches or mould.

If you do decide to make alterations to the loft area, it's important to use the correct products and you should seek advice from a surveyor or qualified tradesperson.

Pipes

It's rare that pipes will freeze on new properties in cold weather but if it does happen, and to avoid boiler problems, you should turn off your boiler and slowly thaw the pipe using warm, not boiling, water. This could be poured from a pan, or by placing a hot water bottle on the pipe.

Radiators

If your radiators are not getting hot, check your boiler is on and the thermostatic valve which may just need turning up.

If only some radiators are cold and your boiler is definitely working, it could be your radiators have air trapped in them and just need 'bleeding'. Only do this when your radiators are cold and the boiler is off. You will find a bleed valve at the top of one end of the radiator, where you can use a radiator key to slowly turn valve. Make sure you hold an old cloth under the valve as some water may escape. You will hear the blocked air escaping. Make sure you then turn the key the other way to close it securely. You may also need to re-pressurise your boiler, as the displaced air will reduce the pressure of the circulating water.

To ensure you get plenty of heat from your radiators, we recommend bleeding them regularly. Don't block them with furniture, keep them clean by vacuuming the top vents and avoid drying clothes on them.

If your radiator leaks during the Defects Liability Period, first make sure the bleeding valve is fully closed with a radiator key. If it still leaks, please put a cloth under the leak to reduce the damage and report this as a defect to us.

Roofing

Roof tiles are not always uniform, so some variation in colour is normal.

If you notice any roof tiles have moved, broken or fallen from the roof during the Defects Liability Period, please report it to us urgently, before any rain water can enter your home.

Shelves and pictures

Be aware when hanging shelves and pictures that there are water pipes and electric cables behind the plaster on some walls. To avoid damaging these, we recommend you use a cable detector, which you can buy from a DIY shop. Any damage caused when hanging shelves or pictures is your own responsibility to fix.

Sinks and wash hand basins

Only water should go down plugholes, so don't dispose of food, cooking fat or any other objects down plug holes as it will cause a blockage. Hair can also build up in baths and showers and cause a blockage, so we recommend you clean plug holes regularly with a liquid drain cleaner.

Surrounding estate and communal areas

If your home is on an estate or in a building with communal areas, we are usually responsible for the maintenance of these areas, paid for by residents through the service charge.

Your lease details our maintenance and repair responsibilities, and your service charge breakdown shows the costs of these services. If there is a problem in any of these communal areas, please contact us.



Telephone line and internet

You will need to contact a telephone provider if you wish to install a telephone or internet service in your home, and they will make any necessary arrangements. Cabling from the incoming telephone line is already installed in your home.

Toilets

It's vital you do not allow any objects apart from lavatory paper to be flushed down toilets. This includes wipes, even those described as 'flushable', and any other sanitary items, nappies or cotton buds.

The cost of clearing a blocked toilet will be passed on to you if the blockage has been caused by any unsuitable items being disposed of in this way. Debris of this type will be pulled from the inspection chamber, where the house that caused the blockage can be identified.

TV sockets

TV sockets in your home are wired with a co-axial cable and connected to the loft space. A TV aerial is not installed, so please take advice from an aerial specialist if you wish to have one fitted.

Water leaks

If water escapes from a leaking or burst pipe, you should first turn off your boiler and then turn off the mains supply at the stopcock, to reduce any damage.

You will have been shown the location of your stopcock when you moved in to your home, but it is usually under the kitchen sink. Remember there is likely to be water still in the pipes, so turning off the stopcock may not stop the leak straight away. You should test the stopcock now and again to make sure it doesn't stick.

Contact us to report a leak from any internal pipes within your home during the Defects Liability Period. After this time, water leaks are your own responsibility to repair, so you should contact a qualified plumber.

Any leak from where you have plumbed in your own washing machine will not be treated as a defect, and is your own responsibility to repair.

If a water main has burst and the leak is coming from a pipe before it reaches your property, you should call your water supplier.

If you find there is no water and you haven't turned off the internal or external stopcock, check with your neighbours first to see if they have the same problem. There could be a water outage in the area, so contact your water supplier to check.

Warranty

Our new homes include a 10 year building warranty, valid from the date they were built. A copy of your building warranty certificate and a breakdown of what is covered is in your Home User Guide. This is an extended warranty, supplied by a number of insurers including NHBC, Premier Guarantee and LABC. They are all very similar but may have slight variations.

During the Defects Liability Period, we generally refer to NHBC guidance, but check your Home User Guide for more information on your warranty provider.

We have included some of NHBC's tolerances at the end of this guide for information.

General property maintenance

Only qualified tradespeople with the correct equipment and insurance will attend to defects on your property within the Defects Liability Period.

When the Defects Liability Period has ended and you need to arrange a repair yourself, please also make sure the person carrying out the work is suitably qualified with the appropriate insurance.

If you have any questions, check your Home User Guide or contact our Customer Service Centre on **0345 111 0000**.



New home warranty and acceptable standards

Your home has been individually built and handcrafted by human beings. This means there will always be some variation in the finished appearance of different elements of the construction, because of the nature of the materials and the ways they are applied. Slight variations are normal.

Your home comes with a new home warranty, usually provided by either NHBC or Premier Guarantee.

They operate under the Consumer Code for Home Builders and all follow fairly similar principles.

NHBC issues technical guidance to its inspection and claims staff, as well as to its registered builders. These standards help explain what is acceptable and what is not.

For guidance, here are NHBC's acceptable tolerances for some of the most common internal finishes. Full information is available in the NHBC Standards book and at www.nhbc.co.uk

Please always refer to all the information in this guide document before reporting a defect. The builder will not be required to attend any items within and from acceptable tolerances.

If you have any questions, please contact us.

Finishes	Examples	Acceptable Tolerances
Walls and Ceilings	Walls and ceilings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Surfaces should be reasonably uniform, although there may be minor textural differences around lights and other fittings. — There should be no visible gaps between fittings and the surface (e.g. around switch plates). — Jointing tape should be fully covered and unobtrusive in the finished surface.
	Plastering and dry lining surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Walls should be adequately flat and within a 5mm deviation measured using a 2m straight edge with equal offsets. — In plastered walls and ceiling, some tooling marks may be visible. — Some cracking (up to 2mm wide) may occur at wall, floor and ceiling junctions, due to shrinkage and differential movement of materials. — Small cracks may occur in wall finishes which pass across floors (e.g. in staircase walls). — Where stair strings abut a wall, a crack of up to 4mm may appear as a result of shrinkage materials.
	Skirtings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The gap between the floor finish (without coverings) and the bottom of the skirting should not exceed 5mm. — Joints should present a continuous appearance when viewed from a distance of 2m in daylight (some initial shrinkage of the skirting may already be evidence at completion of the property). — Gaps may appear at joints and corners due to shrinkage and between the wall finish and skirting due to drying out, shrinkage and fixing position. — The gap between the floor finish and the skirting may increase due to normal drying out, shrinkage and/or deflection, particularly in timber floors.
Doors and Windows	Windows	<p>Window frames should not be distorted in the opening, and a maximum from plumb of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — 5mm when up to a 1.5m in height. — 8mm where larger.
	Doors and Frames	<p>Should always be installed in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations, not to be distorted in the opening, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The gap between the underside of the door and unfinished floor limited to between 10-22mm. — Where a builder provides a floor finish, there should be a gap of 10mm between the bottom of door and floor finish.

Finishes	Examples	Acceptable Tolerances
Floors		<p>Floors shall be built to appropriate tolerances and should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Level with a 4mm deviation per 1m for floors up to 6m across. — A maximum of 25mm out of level for floors over 6m across. — Flat edge within a 5mm deviation, measured using a 2m straight edge with equal offsets. — The effects of normal drying shrinkage on screeded floors may cause minor cracking. — Timber floors and staircases naturally shrink as they dry. As this drying occurs, it may result in squeaking components as they move against each other. This is normal and to be expected.
Glazing	Glass	<p>Glass should be checked in daylight, from within the room and from a minimum distance of 2m (3m for toughened, laminated or coated glass).</p> <p>The following are acceptable where they are not obtrusive or bunched:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Bubbles or blisters. — Hairlines or blobs. — Fine scratches not more than 25mm long. — Minute particles. <p>The above does not apply to areas within 6mm of the edge of the pane, where minor scratching may occur.</p>
Ceramic, concrete & similar tile finishes		<p>Tile finishes shall have an appropriate appearance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Joints should be straight and in alignment, unless the tiles are, by design, irregular in shape. — Wall tile joints should be a minimum of 1m
Fitted furniture	Doors, drawers etc.	<p>Fitted furniture shall have an appropriate appearance.</p> <p>Fitted furniture, including doors and drawers, should:</p> <p>Be visually aligned (vertically, horizontally and in plan), and there should not be significant differences in level at the intersection.</p>

Contact us

 www.riversidehomeownership.org.uk
email: ownership@riverside.org.uk

Customer Service Centre

 **24 hours 365 days a year**
0345 111 0000

We are happy to accept **Text Relay** calls
Press '3' once connected

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