



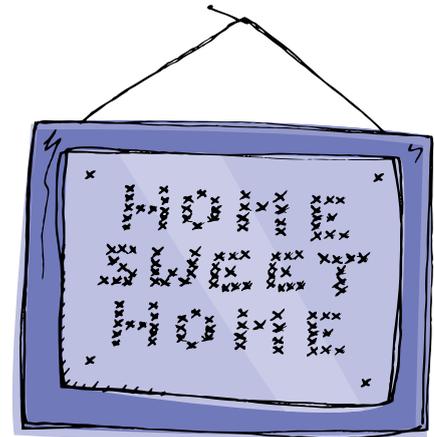
Section 8

Living in your home



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Making your own alterations

You should not make any alterations, improvements or additions to your home (including the gardens), or put up any building or shed, unless you first get our permission in writing.

What things do I need to get permission for?

You can put up pictures, mirrors and small items such as individual shelves without first seeking our permission. You need to get permission for anything that involves adding to or taking away from the structure of the property, or fixtures and fittings, both inside and outside. Examples include:

Outside the property

- Cat or dog flaps
- Paths, patios, hardstanding areas, decking, ramps, steps
- Fencing or walls, gates
- Brick built barbecue areas
- Ponds, rockeries, raised beds, pergolas, gazebos or other decorative features
- Swimming pools or hot tubs
- Timber, metal, plastic, brick or concrete sheds, garages, greenhouses, poly tunnels, summerhouses, gazebos or other permanent or semi-permanent structures
- Pet enclosures, kennels, aviaries, pigeon lofts, poultry housing
- Car ports, lean-tos, conservatories, porches, car inspection pits
- Windows, doors
- TV aerials or satellite receivers, CB aerials

Inside the property

- Kitchen units, sinks, taps, extractor fans
- Bathroom suites: baths, toilets, basins, taps, shower enclosures, showers, saunas, hot tubs
- Electrical fittings such as switches, control panels, light fittings, ceiling fans, sockets
- Electrical wiring
- Heating appliances, boilers, radiators, pipework, programmers, controllers
- Underfloor heating, ceramic or terracotta floor tiling, laminate flooring
- Built-in wardrobes, cupboards and shelving, room dividers
- Wall cladding and textured wall coatings
- Alterations to walls, doors
- Any work in the loft/roof space
- Door entry systems, CCTV systems
- Disabled adaptations, chairlifts/stairlifts

This is not a complete list: if in doubt, please ask us.

To apply for permission, you need to fill in a form, telling us exactly what you would like to do. You can get a form from us at our Histon office, phone: **0300 111 3555** (see 'Essential Information' for our email and office addresses).

We may need to visit you first, to discuss what you want to do. You must not start work until you have permission from us in writing.

Our service standards on requests to make alterations

- We will consider your request, and we will not refuse your request unreasonably
- We will help you if you need help to apply in writing
- We will write to you, within 28 days of receiving your written request, telling you whether or not you can go ahead, or requesting more information about what you want to do
- If we refuse permission, we will tell you the reason
- If we give permission it will include certain conditions that you must keep to

Adaptations and assistive equipment

Adaptations are specialist equipment, extra fittings or alterations that enable people with disabilities to overcome difficulties in their home and make the home more suitable for their needs.

Typical adaptations include:

- Grab rails
- Walk-in showers
- Level access showers
- Shower over bath
- Stair lifts
- Widened doorways
- Ramped access
- Lever taps
- Specialist kitchens
- Flashing doorbells
- Raised sockets

We will work with the Occupational Therapy Service, the Disabled Facilities Grants sections of local councils, the Telecare Co-ordinator and other agencies as necessary, to help our customers to get access to services, and to make sure they are kept fully informed and involved. We will carry out joint visits with other agencies if we need to.

If the work is quite small scale, such as a grab rail or lever taps, you may not need a grant, and we may be able to do the work fairly quickly, as long as we have enough money in our budget.

If you need a grant, we will support you through the adaptation process. This may include help to apply for a grant, and working with the agencies and workmen regarding the installation of the adaptation. Depending on your income, you may have to pay something towards the cost of the work.

Who can apply?

All of our customers may request adaptations, as long as the tenant or other permanent member of the household has a disability.

For major adaptations, we will support customers to apply for Disabled Facilities Grants. Customers are entitled to apply for grant aid, and we will not unreasonably withhold permission for the adaptation to be carried out.

Are there any exceptions?

We will not usually allow adaptations to be done when:

- The adaptation cannot reasonably be done because of the structure of the building. Where this is the case, suitable alternative housing options should be sought

- The household or disabled person is actively seeking to move, and is likely to be re-housed within two years. Where this is the case, we may agree to minor works to improve the quality of life until the customer moves home
- The person is due to have surgery, or is undergoing rehabilitation, where the outcome is likely to improve their ability to manage in their home without adaptations
- The request is for a level-access or walk-in shower and the property is a flat above ground floor with no lift. In this case, we will usually support a transfer request to a ground floor flat, or a flat with lift access. If someone in this situation did not wish to move to other accommodation, we would accept an Occupational Therapist recommendation to install a level-access or walk-in shower.

If you need an adaptation

If you feel that you, or someone who lives with you all the time, needs an adaptation, you should first contact us at our Histon office. We will give you advice about how to get an assessment done by the Occupational Therapy service, and if you need to apply for a grant to get the work done.

Phone 0300 111 3555 (see 'Essential Information' for our email and office addresses).

Pets

You must get permission from us before you get a pet. You do not need permission if the animal is small, quiet and caged, and kept indoors, such as hamsters and gerbils, fish in tanks, non-poisonous insects and reptiles (in suitable containers) and single caged birds, unless you live in supported housing, when you must get permission to keep any pet. The type of property you live in, and the care arrangements, may mean that it is not suitable for keeping a pet. If you live in supported housing and you want to keep a pet, please speak to the scheme manager first.

We will generally give permission for one dog or cat to be kept in certain properties. We will not give permission for a dog or cat to be kept where we consider the facilities to be unsuitable e.g. no access to outdoor space. **We will not allow** dogs covered by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1993, or where we feel that the dog could pose a risk to neighbours.

How do I apply for permission?

Please contact us and tell us about the pet you wish to keep, or use the 'Permission to keep a pet' form given to you when you move in. Please let us know if you need help to fill in the form. We may need to speak to you or visit you at home before we can make a decision, which will be in writing.

If we give permission for you to keep a pet, it will be on condition that:

- You look after your pet responsibly, and do not allow it to foul public or communal areas, or cause nuisance to neighbours and other people in the area

- You ensure that routine healthcare for your pet is carried out as and when required, including regular control of parasites (fleas and worms), vaccinations and neutering where appropriate
- You clear up after your pet, and dispose of faeces, litter and other waste properly
- You are responsible for any damage caused to the property by the pet
- Where a dog is kept, you must have a suitable private garden with a dog-proof fence
- If you need additional fencing, you must provide this. You must get our permission before you put up any fencing (see 'Alterations')
- You must not breed any animal in your home or offer any animal for sale from your home unless we have given you permission to do this
- You do not leave your pet in the property when you are away unless clear arrangements have been made to provide adequate care

You must not get a pet before you get our permission in writing. If your pet causes a nuisance to other people, or damages the property, we may ask you to get rid of your pet. In serious cases, we will consider taking court action, which could lead to you losing your home. If you want to apply for permission to keep a pet, **please phone: 0300 111 3555** (see 'Essential Information' for our email and office addresses).

Being a good neighbour - reducing anti-social behaviour

We know that anti-social behaviour is a very important issue for you and it is for us too. Such behaviour affects your lives and homes and is the cause of much distress, which is why we have made a commitment to tackling it.

The right to enjoy your home and the area you live in

We believe that anti-social behaviour is unacceptable and we will not tolerate it. We will use all powers available to deal with the problem of anti-social behaviour firmly and effectively, but in a fair manner, ensuring that all our customers enjoy living in their homes.

CHS is committed to:

- Making sure that every tenant enjoys the right of security in their own home, regardless of age, race, religion, gender, disability or sexuality
- Making sure that every tenant's right to the peaceful enjoyment of their home is protected
- Creating an environment which makes our estates a more attractive place to live
- Taking strong and effective action to tackle problems of anti-social behaviour, including legal action where necessary.
- Responding professionally and sensitively to complaints
- Aiming to ensure that any action is continued until the problem is resolved to your and our satisfaction, although we recognise that this may not be possible in all cases

We expect you, as a tenant of CHS, to show consideration for your neighbours and not cause nuisance or disturbance to them or their visitors.

Noise

- Be aware of the problems caused by loud noise: keep the volume of televisions, radios and stereos as low as possible, especially late at night and early in the morning. Use washing machines, vacuum cleaners and other noisy equipment during the day and not at unsocial hours
- Try to avoid putting fridges, freezers and stereo speakers against walls that divide you and your neighbour. Carry out DIY work to your home during reasonable hours
- If you are having a party or get-together that may cause noise that may disturb them, please let your neighbours know in advance
- Being considerate about noise is especially important for people who live in flats

Children and visitors

- Take responsibility for your children. Being a good neighbour applies to your children, too. They should be aware that respect should be shown to your neighbours and their property, especially in flats where areas are shared
- Ensure that no deliberate damage occurs to CHS property by you, other persons living with you, or by visitors to your home
- Be responsible for the behaviour of your visitors

Cleaning

- Keep your home reasonably clean
- Take your turn to clean common stairs and landings if you live in a block of flats where no cleaning service is provided (all retirement or 'extra care' supported housing will have cleaning services provided in communal areas)

Gardens and rubbish

- Keep your garden tidy and free of rubbish. If you are unable to do this for medical reasons, please contact us and we will help if we can
- Put your household rubbish and recycling in the bins provided, and ensure it is put out for collection on the right collection day. Put your rubbish and recycling bins back in their normal storage areas when they have been emptied. If you are not sure which bins get collected on which days, contact your local council: see the 'Essential Information' section for details about contacting your council
- Do not dump rubbish or unwanted household items in any communal area, in your gardens or in the street
- If you want to put up a shed, greenhouse or other structure in your garden, then you must get our written permission first. You also need permission before you build a driveway or hard standing at your home. See the section on tenant alterations.

Pets

- Keep pets under control if you are allowed one in your home. Remember to clean up after them and do not allow your pet to foul in communal areas
- If you have a dog, make sure it does not bark or whine for long periods of time, and do not leave it alone if you are away from home for a long time
- You must get our permission to keep a pet: see the section on pets

Running a business

You must not use your home for any business use without first getting written permission from us. We would give permission if the business would not be likely to cause a nuisance to your neighbours. Certain types of business are not allowed, such as vehicle maintenance, running a taxi service or using your home as a bed and breakfast

Parking, please don't:

- Park illegally
- Block entrances and exits, and please do not park on the pavement – this causes problems for disabled people and parents with pushchairs. Please remember that parking restrictions are there for a reason. They may be in place to protect pedestrians or to allow access for emergency vehicles
- Park or abandon untaxed vehicles in your gardens, in parking areas, communal areas, open spaces or in the street

- Park caravans, vans, boats, trailers or other large vehicles where they will cause a nuisance. You must get our permission in writing if you want to keep these or any other large vehicle at your property

Vehicle maintenance

You can carry out minor repairs to your own vehicle, or one belonging to a member of your household, as long as you:

- Do not cause a nuisance to your neighbours
- Do the work on your own drive or garage – not on the road or parking areas
- Do not keep un-roadworthy or illegal vehicles within the boundary of your home
- Clean up properly when you are finished
- Get rid of unwanted oil, engine or vehicle parts properly, and at an authorised site

Drugs and other illegal activities

- You must not deal in drugs, use drugs or possess drugs, or allow anyone living with you to do so
- You must not be involved in any illegal activity

Vandalism & graffiti

Vandalism of homes and estates makes places less pleasant to live in, and increases peoples fear of crime. Repairing damage and removing graffiti costs money, and means we have less to spend on improving customers' homes and on providing other services and facilities.

If you see anyone destroying property or defacing it with graffiti, please **contact the police immediately by phoning: 999**. Please let us know, also, by **phoning 0300 111 3555**. We will treat your call in complete confidence.

Harassment and hate crime

What is harassment?

We consider harassment to be any unwanted behaviour directed at a person or a group of people that is offensive, or that causes anxiety, alarm or distress. It is behaviour meant to interfere with someone's peace and comfort, and which hurts, intimidates, humiliates or ridicules them, or undermines their confidence.

Harassment may include any of the following:

- Abusive or insulting behaviour
- Violence and threats of violence
- Vandalism to property
- Arson or attempted arson
- Repeated and unfair complaints against a person or a group of people
- Activities and action intended to put someone off from living in a particular property
- Abusive phone calls, text messages or emails
- Putting offensive materials near or in the victim's home, for example graffiti

What to do if you are being harassed

If the incident is serious and involves a crime, violence or threats, you should **contact the police immediately by phoning: 999**

Please also contact us to report all incidents and give details of those who are responsible: **phone 0300 111 3555** (see 'Essential Information' for our email and office addresses). One of our employees will contact you to discuss what action we can take to stop the harassment. We will also work closely with other agencies such as the police and Victim Support to help you further.

What is hate crime?

Hate crime describes how individuals or groups can be harassed, victimised or abused because of their race, faith, religion, sex, sexuality or disability. This kind of harassment can take many forms including physical, spoken and emotional attacks, and can be aimed at a person or their property.

Harassment targeted at someone that is motivated by 'hate' is a serious crime and we will not accept it. If you believe you are a victim of hate crime, or if you see an incident or suspect this type of crime is being committed, please report the matter to the police. They offer support to victims and other people affected by hate crime.

We are here to help.

Please also contact us to report all incidents and give details of those who are responsible: **phone 0300 111 3555** (see 'Essential Information' for our email and office addresses). We will work closely with other agencies such as the police and Victim Support to help you further.

Dealing with anti-social behaviour – what you can do

Talk to your neighbours

If your neighbour is being too noisy or is causing a nuisance, talking to them is often the best way to solve the problem. Most people are reasonable if you speak to them in person, and sometimes they may not realise that they are causing a nuisance.

If you would like to talk to your neighbour, but are not sure about how to go about it, follow these simple steps:

- Think about what you want to say beforehand
- Stay calm and friendly - being aggressive is not going to help
- Be clear about what the problem is and how it affects you
- Do not stray from the main issue
- Try and choose a convenient moment for you and your neighbour
- Try not to interrupt the other person when they are talking
- Try not to shout, even if your neighbour does
- Try to stay in control and not be abusive
- Give your neighbour a reasonable length of time to change their behaviour before you take things further

If the nuisance continues

If you cannot solve the problem in this way and the nuisance continues, please contact us for further advice. We may ask you to keep accurate diary records of incidents. This will help us to see if there are clear times and dates when the nuisance is being caused. The information will also help us if we need to take court action to stop the nuisance. **Phone 0300 111 3555** (see 'Essential Information' or 'Contacting us' for our email and office addresses).

Dealing with anti-social behaviour or harassment – what CHS can do

CHS will not accept any form of anti-social behaviour, and we will take action against people who cause a nuisance to, harass, assault, intimidate or abuse their neighbours.

What action can CHS take?

Wherever possible, we will try to sort out any problems informally and help the people involved to sort out their differences. We can arrange mediation (independent help to sort out a problem) between the people involved if they agree.

Where there is clear evidence of anti-social behaviour, we can take legal action. This action can include:

- **Ending a starter tenancy** before it becomes an assured tenancy
- **Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.** If the person causing the nuisance agrees, we can draw up an Acceptable Behaviour Contract between them, us, the local council and the local police. The person causing the nuisance agrees to stop causing problems

- Taking out an **injunction** (a legal order which tells a person what they can or cannot do) against the person responsible
- Giving the person responsible an **anti-social behaviour order (ASBO)** which is a civil court order which tells a person what they can or cannot do. We must work closely with the police and the local council to do this
- **Tenancy demotion.** We can apply to a court to have a person's tenancy rights reduced for at least 12 months. This makes it easier for us to end the tenancy during this time if the person's behaviour does not improve
- Seeking a **possession order** against the person responsible (a court order that allows us to take back their home if they do not stop their anti-social behaviour)
- **Evicting** the person responsible (forcing them to leave their home). This can only be done if the County Court agrees. We would need to give strong evidence of the nuisance, including witness statements from neighbours who have been affected. People would usually also have to agree to give evidence in court

Members of your family and your visitors

You are responsible for how your family, other members of your household and your visitors behave in and around your home. If you, a member of your family or household or your visitors break the conditions of your tenancy, we will take action against you and you could lose your home.

Our service standards for dealing with anti-social behaviour

- We will treat all complaints in confidence, and will not give your name to someone else without your agreement. You should be aware, though, that it is sometimes easy for a person to guess who has complained about them, particularly if they are neighbours
- We will respond to your complaint within 24 hours or the next working day, and offer to visit you. If there is a threat or violence occurs, you should call the Police without delay at any time of day or night – **phone 999**
- We will agree with you what action is to be taken, and keep it under review with you; the action plan will be in writing and you will have a copy
- We will agree a timescale with you for regular contact on how your case is going (at least monthly). This could be by letter, e-mail, phone or visit
- We will respect your request for confidentiality
- We will take the lead and work with other agencies to deal with problems
- We will contact the people responsible for the nuisance within 3 days of any visit
- We will provide extra support for those who need it e.g. translation, advocacy, support with literacy and referrals to other agencies
- We will support witnesses in any legal action through the entire process
- We aim to close all cases by agreement with you, although this may not be possible in every case

Mediation services

We can offer mediation for residents who are arguing. This will involve a trained volunteer, who is independent of us, visiting each person to discuss the problems they are facing. They will listen to what people have to say but will not take sides in the dispute. They will try to help and find a permanent solution to the problem that both sides can accept. This is a voluntary process and can help sort out a wide range of neighbour disputes over issues such as car parking, boundary problems and noise nuisance.

Mediation is a process in which someone who isn't involved, the mediator, helps people work out an agreement. However, it is important to remember that the people involved in the dispute work out the agreement, not the mediator. For more information on this service, please contact us: **phone 0300 111 3555** (see 'Essential Information' for our email and office addresses).

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse experienced by people in all types of relationship. This can affect you, your partner, your children, your partner's children or any other person living in your home.

CHS is opposed to all forms of domestic abuse (whether between partners or ex-partners, or between other family members and against vulnerable adults) and we will provide positive support to those who experience it. We will take strong action against people who commit domestic abuse, where we have the

power to do so, and we will work with partner agencies to help to increase the choices for those who are abused.

You do not have to suffer alone – there are people who can help.

How CHS supports victims of Domestic abuse

CHS puts victims of domestic abuse at the centre of its approach. We aim to listen, support, and where possible do what the victim wants to be done. We will accept an incident as domestic abuse if anyone who reports it (e.g. the victim, a witness, a police officer or housing officer) sees it to be so, and will record it as such.

We accept that evidence of domestic abuse will not always be available, and we will accept the incident without formal evidence unless further investigations prove otherwise. We will agree with you what you want to happen next. We will provide an investigator of the same gender if you wish.

If you abuse your partner, and they leave the home because of the abuse and do not plan to return, we have the right to apply to the court to evict you.

There are many organisations that can help as well as CHS, such as the police, your GP, solicitors and Women's Aid. Helplines include:

 **Women's Aid National Helpline
0808 2000 247**

 **Men's Advice
0808 801 0327**

Cambridge Women's Aid
 Emergency Helpline
07730 322098 (6pm to 9:30am)

We are here to help

If you need any help, advice or support, you can contact us and we will put you in touch with agencies that can help you. **Phone 0300 111 3555** (see 'Essential Information' for our email and office addresses).

Overcrowding

You must not overcrowd your home by allowing too many people to live there. When you were allocated your home, you would have been given a property that was the right size for your family. We will not take action against you where your home has become overcrowded because you have had more children, or where you have formed a new relationship, and your partner and their children have come to live with you as part of your family. In this case, we would encourage you to seek larger accommodation through the Home-Link scheme.

If you seriously overcrowd your property by allowing friends and associates to live in your home, we will take legal action to evict you.

Home safety

Gas

If you smell gas, you should do the following:

- **Call Transco immediately on 0800 111 999.** If you use a mobile phone, go outside and make the call well away from the property
- Turn the handle at the meter to the flat (horizontal) 'off' position
- Do not smoke or use naked flames
- Open windows and doors
- Do not use any electrical switches or appliances

Electricity

To make sure you are safe, you should do the following:

- Buy good-quality plugs that meet British Standards Regulations
- Make sure all wires are connected correctly
- Switch off the TV and hi-fi when not using them
- Get a suitably qualified tradesperson to do electrical repairs

You should never do any of the following:

- Use an appliance with a damaged lead
- Use plugs or sockets that are cracked or chipped
- Run an appliance from a light fitting
- Overload sockets with adaptors
- Allow leads from appliances to hang over a work surface or touch the hot parts of a cooker

Preventing fire

Many fires in the home start as a result of carelessness, so remember:

- Don't smoke in bed
- Stub cigarettes out properly before emptying ashtrays
- Use a fireguard around fires
- Don't dry clothes around fires or cookers
- Keep matches and lighters away from children
- Close all doors before you go to bed
- When using a chip pan – do not leave it unattended (if it catches fire, smother it with a damp cloth - **never use water**)
- Don't use any kind of barbecue on balconies, indoors or in a garage or shed
- Unplug electrical appliances when you are not using them
- Do not place candles near materials which can catch fire easily or where they can be knocked over. Put out candles before you go to bed

Smoke detectors

If a fire starts in your home, a smoke detector (alarm) can give you vital extra seconds for you and your family to escape.

Make sure that any smoke detectors in your home are in good working order by testing them each week. Just press the 'test' button to see whether the alarm sounds. Never use an open flame to test a detector.

If your detector uses a battery, remember to change the battery at least once a year, or as soon as the 'low battery' signal sounds.

In case of fire:

If the alarm sounds and a fire has broken out, follow these instructions:

- Do not try to put out the fire unless you can do it safely
- Never put water on a chip pan fire – this will make it worse. Soak a cloth (tea towel or hand towel) in plenty of water and cover the pan with this
- Get everyone out of the house as quickly as possible and **call 999** and ask for the fire service
- Have an escape route planned - call your local fire prevention officer and ask for advice
- Make sure your children know what to do if a fire breaks out
- Know where your house keys are
- Do not go back into the house for any reason

Preventing crime

Many burglaries can be prevented. They are often done on the 'spur of the moment', where a burglar may see an open window or other easy point of entry and takes a chance.

Easy ways to prevent crime

- 1 When you go out, lock the door and close the windows – even if you are only going out for a short time
- 2 Never leave a spare key in a hiding place like under a doormat or inside the letterbox – a thief will look there first
- 3 Remember to remove keys from locked windows and keep them out of sight in a safe place

- 4 Keep all valuables out of sight
 - 5 Leave a light on inside the house when you are away from home to create the impression that someone is in. Choose well-used rooms such as the living room or bedroom
 - 6 If possible, use timer switches for lights if you are away from home for long periods. Ask someone you trust to keep an eye on your home for you
 - 7 Be aware of strangers hanging around in or near your home. If you see anyone acting suspiciously, contact the police
 - 8 Garages and garden sheds can be full of expensive tools, which are ideal for breaking into the rest of the house, so never leave them unlocked
 - 9 Lock ladders inside your garage or shed to stop a thief using them to reach upstairs windows. If you do not have room to do this, chain or padlock them, horizontally, to a sturdy bracket on an outside wall
- 2 Only open the door to the caller when you have put the security chain or security bar on
 - 3 Always make sure that visitors are who they say they are – ask to see their identification
 - 4 All our employees and officers from the police, gas, electricity and water companies wear identification badges. Please make sure you ask to see this before letting someone into your home
 - 5 If you are in any doubt at all, suggest that the caller should come back later. You can then check their story by phoning the organisation or company they claim to represent. Genuine callers will not mind waiting
 - 6 Check any phone number they give you in your own phone directory. Do not rely on the number on their card
 - 7 Always lock the back door before opening the front door
 - 8 Let the police and your neighbours know if you have had a suspicious caller at the door
 - 9 There may be an emergency, so do not leave the door chain or door bar on all the time. This may cause a delay. Only put these items on before you answer the door

Callers at the door

Unfortunately, some people who knock at your door may not be who they say they are. Some criminals will pretend to be someone else to carry out crimes on vulnerable people in the community.

These 'bogus callers' can be quite convincing and will try to talk their way into your home.

Tips for dealing with bogus callers

- 1 Before you open the door, check to see who it is by looking through your front window or by using a door viewer if you have one

If you need any more advice about home security, for you or your family members, you can contact the local crime prevention officer on the police non-emergency number for the area where you live: look in the phone book under Police

Preventing identity theft

Identity theft, sometimes called identity fraud, is the name given to a type of crime where someone gets hold of and uses another person's personal information in some fraud or deception, usually for financial gain.

Today, much of life depends on using information that can be misused by people who are not authorised to have this information, information such as social security numbers, credit-card details and banking passwords are now vital parts of everyday life, and yet they are relatively easy to use for fraud if they fall into the wrong hands.

Tips for preventing identity theft

- 1 Shred mail and other paperwork that contains personal information, including junk mail, before throwing it away. You can buy small shredders fairly cheaply
- 2 Do not carry unnecessary information with you, which could be used for identity theft, such as national insurance cards, utility bills, passports and so on
- 3 Check your bank and credit-card statements. Look out for any unusual purchases, withdrawals and so on. Also be aware if you stop getting statements or bills that you always used to receive. This may mean that someone has managed to have your records changed to a different address
- 4 Do not give out personal information without good reason. Do not give out any information such as account numbers, PIN codes and passwords to anyone who phones or emails you at home. Genuine organisations will never ask for such information
- 5 Cancel any lost or stolen credit, debit or store cards immediately. Keep a note of the emergency numbers you should call
- 6 If your passport or driving licence has been lost or stolen, contact the organisation that issued it immediately
- 7 Keep your personal information secure when using your card over the phone, on the internet or in shops by making sure that other people cannot overhear or see your personal details
- 8 You should keep personal documents in a safe place, preferably in a lockable drawer or cabinet at home. You should consider storing valuable financial documents with your bank

Pest control

Rats, mice and other pests

If you discover rats, mice, fleas, wasps nests, ants, cockroaches or any other pests in your home, please contact your local council's Environmental Health Team. They will be able to give you advice or arrange for pest control officers to visit to help you get rid of them.

There may be a charge for some of the work they do for you.

Contact details for your local council are in the 'Essential Information' section at the front of this handbook.

Asbestos

Asbestos is a natural mineral found in rocks all over the world. It was widely used as a building material during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

When asbestos-containing materials are damaged or deteriorate with age, they can release tiny fibres into the air. These fibres can penetrate deep into the lungs. They can stay there a long time and cannot be coughed out causing illnesses such as cancer.

There are asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) in about 5.5 million buildings in the UK. However the risk to the public from asbestos in the home is low. The general risk arises when asbestos is damaged or drilled, sawn, scrubbed or sanded. DIY work can result in brief but high levels of exposure. If you think a material might contain asbestos, don't work on it.

To gather information on asbestos in your home, CHS will continue to survey its properties. The survey is classed as a "Type 2 Non-invasive survey" by the Health and Safety Executive.

Properties will be re-inspected regularly, depending on the type and condition of asbestos and level of risk.

After receiving a survey result, CHS will assess the risk from any known ACMs and decide what action, if any to take. All this information will be held on the Asbestos Register, which will be kept up to date.

If you are planning home improvements, always ask our permission – we can check our records and advise if any asbestos is present or presumed to be present. If you have any queries about asbestos in your home then please contact us for further advice.

Energy efficiency in the home

Here are some simple energy-saving measures from the Energy Saving Trust, which can be applied to what you do everyday. They will not only reduce the energy you use, they will also save you money. Go online for more energy saving tips at: www.energysavingtrust.org.uk

Free internet access is available from your local library

Top ten energy-saving tips

- 1 Wherever possible, dry your clothes outside. Drying them on a radiator lowers the room temperature, making your boiler work harder, costing you more to heat your home. It also increases condensation, which can lead to mouldy walls and ceilings
- 2 Turning your central heating thermostat down by 1°C could save you up to 10% on your energy bills, and typically saves around £55 per year. If you have a programmer, set your heating and hot water to come on only when required rather than all the time. Ask us if you need help to set your timer

- 3 Use energy saving light bulbs. They last up to 10 times longer than ordinary bulbs, and using one can save you around £40 over the lifetime of the bulb. This saving could be around £65 over its lifetime if you're replacing a high wattage traditional bulb, or one used for more than a few hours a day
- 4 If possible, fill up the washing machine, tumble dryer or dishwasher: one full load uses less energy than two half loads
- 5 Draw your curtains at night and tuck them behind the radiator, to stop heat escaping and reduce draughts. Use draught excluders to keep out draughts under doors
- 6 Report dripping taps to us; a dripping hot water tap wastes energy and in one week wastes enough hot water to fill half a bath
- 7 A 5 minute shower typically uses only half as much water as a bath
- 8 Is your water too hot? Your cylinder thermostat should be set at 60°C/140°F. Turning the temperature down is not only safer, but you could save money too
- 9 Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave laptops and mobile phones on charge unnecessarily.
- 10 Always turn off the lights when you leave a room

How to set your heating and hot water controls

Heating Controls

The more control you have over your heating the more energy you can save. This section lists the controls necessary for each type of heating system, and explains their use. It focuses on the controls you are likely to have in your home.

Central heating with radiators and a boiler

A properly controlled system should have:

- A boiler thermostat
- A room thermostat
- A programmer

Or:

- A programmable room thermostat (instead of separate programmer and room thermostat)
- Thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs)

Boiler thermostat

This is on your boiler. It controls the temperature of the water flowing through the radiators. If it is the only control on the system, it should be set on high/maximum in the winter, and low or half-way between maximum and minimum in the spring and autumn. If there is also a room thermostat and/or thermostatic radiator valves, use these to control the temperature in the rooms and set the boiler thermostat at high/maximum.

Room thermostat

A room thermostat works by sensing the air temperature and switching on the heating when the room temperature falls below the thermostatic setting, and switching it off once this temperature has been reached. It reads the temperature in the room where the thermostat is.



Room thermostat

It should not be located near a radiator, or other source of heat, or in a position which is either sunny or draughty. This thermostat should be set at a comfortable temperature between about 18 and 21°C.

If you only have numbers on the thermostat, check the temperature in the room with a thermometer. It is very easy to get used to heating that is set higher than it needs to be, and this will waste energy and make your heating bills high. If you have no trouble keeping warm, turning the thermostat down by 1°C could save up to 10% on yearly heating bills.

Thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs)

Thermostatic radiator valves sense the air temperature around them and control the flow of water through the radiator which they are fitted to. They help improve comfort in your home by allowing you to set different temperatures in different rooms. This also helps you save money and energy.



Never turn the radiator valves tightly off, as this can cause them to jam. As a general rule, setting the radiator valve to the middle setting will produce a comfortable temperature. Turning the radiator valve higher will not make the room heat up more quickly; it will lead to the radiator continuing to heat the room beyond the temperature you need, making it uncomfortably hot and wasting energy.

Programmable

Programmable allow you to set 'On' and 'Off' time periods. Some models switch the central heating and hot water on and off at the same time, while most allow the hot water and heating to come on and go off at different times. As a general rule, set the system to come on half an hour before you want the house to be warm, and go off half an hour before you go out or go to bed. If you change your routine, use the override button to switch it on or off. Some systems have a button you can press for an extra hour's heating or hot water. Avoid having the heating on for 24 hours if possible. If it is very cold overnight, and some heating is essential, low background heating is better than leaving it on at the daytime temperature. In this case, use the room thermostat to adjust the temperature.

Timers

There are many different timers, and it is impossible to give detailed instructions for all of them.

They are all either manual or digital, and the following is a guide as to how the two types should be programmed. Many of them will have instructions written on them, and while these can seem complicated, working through them a step at a time should help.

How to set a central heating timer

Manual timers



- 1 Set the clock to the time of day it is when you set the timer (most use the 24 hour clock, so 5pm is 17:00, for example)
- 2 If you want the heating to come on in the morning, and stay on all day until late in the evening, set button number 1 to the time you want it to come on, and button number 4 to the time you want it to go off. Then set the sliding control to “once” or “all day”
- 3 For heating that comes on for a while in the morning, goes off during the day and on again in the evening do the following:
 - Set button number 1 to the time you want it to come on in the morning
 - Set button number 2 to the time you want it to go off in the morning
 - Set button number 3 to the time you want it to come on in the evening
 - Set button number 4 to the time you want it to go off in the evening
 - Set the sliding control to “twice” or “auto”
- 4 If you need the heating on all the time, set the sliding control to “constant” or “on”. When the heating is on “constant” or “on” the positioning of the buttons only applies to the hot water, which can be set in the same way as for the heating.

Digital timers



Most digital timers have instructions on them, often inside the flap covering the setting buttons. Some allow you to set the hot water and heating separately, and to have different settings for each day. For example, you might need different settings at the weekend. All timers are different, but the following steps will be necessary:

- 1 Set the day and the time now.
Move the slider to “Clock” or “Time”.
The time will be set using + or – buttons
- 2 Set the times you want the heating to come on and go off. There will be a button to select “heating” or “hot water”, and probably another to register or set each setting
- 3 There will probably be a way to copy these settings for the next day if you wish, or you can set each day separately
- 4 Do the same for the hot water
- 5 Select “twice” (turns on and off at the times you set), “once” (comes on at the time you set in the morning and goes off at the time you set in the evening, so it is on all day), “on” (on all the time) or “off”

Electric Storage Heaters



These heaters use cheaper off-peak (Economy 7) electricity during the night. They store the heat, which is then given out when it is needed during the day. They have two controls, one called Input (may be called “Auto-set control”, or “Charge”), the other called Output (“Room temperature”, or “Boost”).

The Input control controls how much heat is stored in the heater. In winter turn this to a higher setting to make sure enough heat is stored. Between 3 and 5 is usually right, but you may need to experiment to work out the right setting for you. Turn them down in spring and autumn, when some heating is still needed. In summer, turn the heater off at the wall socket.

The Output control controls how much heat is given out by the heater. This should be turned down when you go to bed or go out, and adjusted if the room is too warm.

Some newer heaters have an automatic charge control which regulates the amount of heat stored according to the temperature of the room, or the temperature outside. Some output controls include a room thermostat and a timer.

Some people find that they need to use an extra heater later in the evening, usually an electric heater. This will be much more expensive to run than the storage heater, so check that the output control is on maximum before you decide to use extra heating. Remember to turn it back to low before you go to bed.

Hot Water Controls

Boiler or hot water cylinder?

If you have central heating, your hot water will normally be heated by your **boiler**, which will look something like this:



Boilers are usually mounted on the wall in the kitchen, but they may be in another room, and sometimes they are at low level, under a work surface, for example.

Hot water tank + immersion heater

Some central heating systems also have a hot water tank, which is usually found in the airing cupboard. You will also have a hot water tank if you have electric storage heaters. It will either be covered with foam insulation or have an insulating jacket fitted to it.



Hot water tank with jacket



*Insulated hot water tank
— Thermostat*

Thermostat

This may be on the hot water tank or on the boiler if this is a Combi boiler. The temperature usually recommended is 60°C, high enough to kill off bacteria.

If the thermostat is on the outside of your tank it will usually look something like this:



Use a small screwdriver to turn the dial to set the temperature you want.

Immersion heater

An immersion heater is fitted to the hot water tank to provide back-up in case your boiler is not working. If you have electric heating, it will be your only water heater. There may be 1 or 2 immersion heaters fitted to your hot water tank.

If you have an immersion heater and you need to change the setting of your hot water temperature, please contact us and we will come and set it for you.

If you have electric heating there may be a timer that allows you to set when your hot water comes on and goes off. If you have central heating, there will be a switch to turn on your immersion heater if you need hot water and your boiler isn't working.

Programmer or timer

The water heating can be programmed in the same way as the central heating. Usually they can be programmed separately so that if the heating is on all day, you may only need hot water for a short time in the morning and evening. Think about what times of the day you need hot water; you may need it in the morning, for washing, showers etc. and in the evening, for washing up, baths etc. You may only need the water heating on for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. Experiment to see what suits you.