

# My new home



A newly built home is an individually hand crafted product, so it will be affected by having people living in it. This leaflet explains how you can help your home adjust to being lived in, and explains who is responsible for putting right any problems in your home's first year.

## Helping your new home adjust

To help your newly built home adjust to being occupied you should:

- Inspect your home on the day you move in, paying particular attention to sanitary ware, windows, kitchen fittings, wall tiles and appliances.
  - Contact our Maintenance team as soon as you notice a fault or problem with anything.
  - Familiarise yourself with how the smoke detectors, heating systems and other appliances work.
  - Check the settings on the heating system if it does not appear to be working.
  - Check batteries are working in an appliance before reporting a fault.
  - Read the Occupiers' Manual. If you require any assistance with this then please contact your Housing Officer.
  - Familiarise yourself with how to fully open the windows in case of an emergency.
  - Maintain a reasonable even temperature by using central heating sparingly during the first few weeks. (This is because the timber and plaster used to build your home shrinks when heated).
  - Let us know if cracks wider than a £1 coin appear (shrinkage cracks are expected, but large ones will need to be looked at).
- Fill any minor shrinkage cracks after the property has dried out (usually after a year) with a good filler.
  - Keep built-in wardrobe doors slightly ajar, especially if the wardrobe is on an external wall.
  - Wipe away any condensation you find on windows.
  - Cover your pans when cooking and don't allow the kettle to boil for longer than necessary. This will reduce moisture.
  - Close the door when cooking or taking a bath.
  - Avoid using portable gas heating appliances as these create a large amount of water vapour.
  - Allow moisture to escape by opening windows or trickle ventilators. Use the extractor fan if one is fitted.
  - Put washing outside to dry where possible, or vent your tumble dryer to the outside.
  - **Give us access to your home for an end of defects inspection. This is the last chance for the builder to put right any faults and make sure everything is working as it should be.**



### Please do not:

- Paint or wallpaper any walls within the first year. The builder will probably have painted the walls with a light paint that lets moisture work itself out during the drying out period.
- Block airbricks and ventilators, these are installed specifically to allow moisture to escape.
- Alter or change fixtures and fittings as the builder may no longer be responsible for fixing any problems. This includes light fittings, switches and shower heads.



### Faults in your home in the first year

Defects are faults that occur in your newly built home in the first year, due to poor workmanship, quality, performance or design.

The builder is responsible for fixing these faults within the first 12 months of your home being built, which is referred to as the 'defects liability period'.

Here are some examples of things the builder is responsible for fixing and also what you are responsible for fixing in the first year. Please note, defects are not wear and tear.

### The builder is responsible for:

- Wrongly installed fixtures and fittings, such as plug sockets, extractor fans, door locks and lights (if you have changed any of these already, the builder will not be responsible for fixing any problems and it could make the electrics warranty invalid).
- The wrong connection of utilities such as gas, electricity or water.
- Doors not opening or closing properly.

- Bathroom or kitchen fixtures wrongly installed, for example a toilet not flushing properly, or leaking plumbing.
- Nail pops - when nails work themselves loose and plaster pops out from the surface of a ceiling or wall.

### You are responsible for:

- Blocked guttering or plumbing resulting from misuse.
- Damage or wear and tear.
- Condensation or damp from lack of ventilation.
- Doors that won't close if you have fitted carpet yourself (the doors may need to be shaved).
- Reporting faults as soon as possible.
- Any gifted items such as clothes airers, window blinds or carpets.

### How to report a fault/defect

You need to tell us as soon as you notice a fault or problem with your new home. To report a problem during office hours, please do one of the following:

- Call us on **01442 292301**
- Email us at **[maintenance.services@hightownha.org.uk](mailto:maintenance.services@hightownha.org.uk)**
- You can also report faults on our website at **[www.hightownha.org.uk](http://www.hightownha.org.uk)**
- For out of hours emergencies please call 0845 160 00 77 (local rate) or 0203 701 3525 (from a mobile), unless otherwise stated in your Occupiers' Manual.



The builder will then contact you directly to arrange a convenient time to inspect your home and fix the fault.

## Timescales for fixing faults

Our timescales for fixing faults give priority to more urgent work. **Minor cosmetic faults such as shrinkage cracks larger than a £1 coin may only be rectified at the end of defects inspection.** This is because the builder will want to make sure your home has fully adjusted to being occupied. If you are advised the fault you are reporting will be left until this time then please make a note of it on the back page for future reference.

Teething problems with new homes are not unusual and we will do our best to liaise with the builder whose responsibility it is to put things right. We will keep you informed of progress.

**Our response times for different types of faults are as follows:**

### Emergency - Within 24 hours

- A problem that puts the health, safety or security of people at immediate risk.

### Urgent – Within 3 working days

- Fault causing discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance and likely to lead to further deterioration of the building.

### Routine – 20 working days

- Fault that can be deferred without serious discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance.

### End of defects inspection

Please remember the end of defects inspection is the last chance the builder will have to make sure everything is working as it should be and to put right any faults. When you are contacted by Hightown about the inspection, if the proposed time is not convenient then please re-arrange with us for another time.

You can note any faults on the next page.

## Complaints about defects

If you have a complaint about the way your defect is being dealt with, this will be looked at informally under the following defects complaints process below.

1. Please bring the matter to the attention of the Development Officer for your home. They will liaise with the builder and aim to resolve the matter to your satisfaction within 7 working days.

2. If you are still dissatisfied, please ask for the matter to be escalated to the Development Manager who will aim to resolve the matter with the builder within 10 working days.
3. If the problem has still not been resolved you can ask for the matter to be considered by the Head of Development who will decide whether it is appropriate for Hightown to step in to carry out the work (and then recharge it to the builder). They will aim to do this within 10 working days.

If you are still dissatisfied then you can escalate your complaint through our formal complaints process.

**Tell us as soon as you notice a fault or problem with your new home. To report a problem during office hours:**

- **Call us on 01442 292301**
- **Email us at**  
maintenance.services@hightownha.org.uk
- **You can also report faults on our website at [www.hightownha.org.uk](http://www.hightownha.org.uk)**

