

This leaflet gives basic guidance on simple household repairs and maintenance. Only attempt jobs you feel confident you can do, and make sure they are not repairs we should be doing (see leaflet: *Repairs and maintenance*). If in doubt, ask your housing officer for advice.

## Decorating your home

Successful redecoration depends on thorough preparation. You should clean surfaces thoroughly and fill any cracks and holes.

## Existing paintwork

Thoroughly rub down painted wood surfaces with an abrasive paper (such as sandpaper) so the new paint can grip. One undercoat and one top coat usually give a satisfactory finish, unless you are changing the colour.

## Natural-wood finishes

Treat wood window frames and doors with a well-known varnish or stain treatment.

## Doors and windows

Please do not paint:

- aluminium doors and windows;
- safety devices on windows (please tell us straight away if the device no longer works properly); and
- door hinges, locks and handles as this will make them difficult to use.

## Asbestos

A survey showed that some (but not all) of our properties had 'asbestos-containing material' in the textured coatings of the ceilings. Even though there is only a very small risk of exposure to residents, please do not use a mechanical sander on textured coatings. See leaflet: *A guide to asbestos*

## Painting ceilings and walls

Remove all grease, dirt or loose plaster and fill cracks or holes. Two coats of a good-quality emulsion paint should be enough, unless the surface is very poor. A roller or paint pads save time and effort if you are not used to a wide brush.

Make sure that any staining on walls and ceilings is thoroughly sealed with a stain-blocking product to prevent the stain showing through new decorations.

## Wallpapering

First soak the old paper and strip it off with a scraper, taking care not to dig into the plaster. **We will not be held responsible for damaged plaster resulting from incorrect use of a steam stripper.**

If you need to paint ceilings or woodwork, do this next. Join the new paper edge-to-edge, fitting it neatly to the ceiling, skirting board, door and window openings and electrical fittings. Using an anti-fungicide paste will lessen the chance of mould growth.

Don't use vinyl wallpaper in bathrooms and kitchens, where condensation settles.

## Electrical

### Plugs for appliances

Only square pin plugs are suitable for your appliances. Each plug contains a fuse which you can see by unscrewing the plug top. You must use the correct fuse for each appliance – if you are not sure, check the manufacturer's guide or user manual.

New wiring		Old wiring
Brown	Live	Red
Blue	Neutral	Black
Green & yellow	Earth	Green

Remove the screws from the plug top and check that the fuse is correct for the appliance.

- Strip about 2 inches of the outer plastic insulation off the wires, taking care not to cut through the inner coloured insulation.
- Check the wires are the right length to screw into the correct hole when the outer insulation is held by the cable grip.
- Strip off the coloured insulation to provide just enough bare wire to thread into the holes. You should not be able to see any bare wire once you have tightened the screws. Twist each wire to avoid loose strands.
- Pass the wires under the cable grip and screw each wire tightly into its correct hole. Tighten the cable grip and replace the plug top.

### Resetting your RCD (residual current device)

If more than one light or appliance fails at once, your RCD switch may have tripped in the fuse box. Check all electrical appliances to look for causes – you may be overloading a single socket with, for instance, a kettle, toaster and a microwave.

If the RCD has tripped, the RCD switch will be in the down position. You will need to reset the switch to the 'on' position.

After checking your appliances, if the RCD trips again, disconnect all appliances before resetting the RCD, then plug in each appliance in turn. If the RCD still trips, the fault will probably be in that appliance or its plug.

**If the RCD keeps tripping and it is clearly not one of your appliances to blame, report the fault to us.**

### Other electrical work

Any additions or alterations to the electrical installation should always be carried out by a competent electrician and given the appropriate certificate. **Never tamper with the electricity board's fuse and seals. It is illegal and dangerous.**

## Plumbing and drainage

### Clearing blocked pipes or waste traps

In most cases you can clear a blocked bath, sink or wash basin with a plunger or a drain-clearing product available from most hardware stores. Make sure you follow the instructions. If the blockage is stubborn you may have to remove the waste trap to clear it.

You can do this quite easily with the instructions on the next page.

- Make sure that the blocked sink, bath or basin is completely drained of water.
- Undo the plastic nuts that fix the white plastic trap to the waste pipe and sink (or bath) and empty it into a bucket.
- Remove any blockages such as hair and cooking fat, and flush the waste trap through in another sink before refitting it.
- Make sure you put all the seals back correctly, tighten by hand and then turn a further half of a turn with a wrench.
- When you've finished, test for leaks.

If you cannot clear the blockage in this way, contact our repairs team. You are responsible for clearing the drains within the system serving your property and we may charge you for any work we need to do.

It is better to try to prevent any problems than try to clear a blocked waste pipe. The drainage system to your property was only designed to take foul water and toilet tissue.

***Do not put cooking fat, food, hair, nappies, wipes, sanitary towels and so on into sinks or toilets.***

#### **Mending a faulty cistern**

If the water tank or toilet cistern starts to overflow, check the ball valve in the tank or cistern. Gently press the valve and allow it to rise again, taking care not to bend the arm. Repeat a few times. This may clear any particles wedged behind the valve piston. If this does not stop the dripping, report it to the repairs department straight away. Stop the overflow at night by turning off the stopcock which controls the water to the tank or cistern.

#### **Hard to read?**

If you would like this document in another format, such as large print or a coloured background, or if you would like this or any of our leaflets translated into another language, please contact our office:

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