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Contact us

E: contact@cottsway.co.uk
T: **01993 890000**

Cottsway House
Heynes Place
Avenue Two
Witney
Oxfordshire OX28 4YG

Our customer charter

Our customer charter includes lots of information about our services. It also sets out the standards tenants can expect from us while living in a Cottsway home – and what we expect in return. It is reviewed regularly to ensure it is up-to-date: www.cottsway.co.uk/publications



Quick guide

You've got the keys to your new home. Here's what you need to know straight away and what to do in an emergency. The rest of the Home User Guide has more details to help you settle in. Please contact us if you need any further help or advice.

Cracks and gaps

New buildings move and shrink. So as your home continues to settle and dry out, you'll probably notice small cracks and gaps on the walls, ceilings and around woodwork. Don't worry, these are normal.

To minimise cracks and gaps:

- Try to heat your home evenly – keep the heating turned on at a moderate temperature to avoid your home getting too hot or too cold.
- Wait for at least 12 months before painting or decorating, so that your home has time to completely dry out.

Garden and parking

You are responsible for looking after your garden. Check if you have an allocated parking space and any areas of garden or hard landscaping that you need to look after. The spaces allocated are for your use only. Visitors are to park in visitor's bays which will be clearly marked.

Gas, electricity and water

Please contact the current suppliers to take over the accounts from the day you move in, or to switch suppliers. The suppliers are listed in the 'Know your home guide' in the Manuals and certificates section.

Recharges

If a defect repair is reported to us and this is found not to be a defect, there may be a recharge from the builder for their time. Typical examples of this include unblocking drains where items other than toilet paper have been flushed down the toilet, reports of faulty appliances where these were not installed by Cottsway or damage to your home caused after you have moved in.

If you are installing any electrical or gas appliances, it's important to use a qualified person to carry out the work for your safety.

Rubbish and recycling

Check with us whether you need to order waste and recycling bins from the local council, and where the collection point is for your home.

Find out when your waste and recycling collection days are from the local council's website (including any changes on public holidays). Please follow the council's guidance on what can and can't be collected.



Service charges

Some homes with shared spaces have a service charge. This helps cover cleaning, maintenance, grass cutting, repairs, lifts, and other running costs. We'll confirm whether this applies before you move in, and full details will be included in your tenancy agreement. For more information, see our Customer Charter.



Snagging

Your home has been snagged to the tolerances set out by the warranty provider. These state that all surfaces should be reasonably smooth when viewed in daylight from a distance of 2-metres with all artificial lighting switched off. Where painted surfaces have been touched up, minor colour variations may occur. Further snagging after the property is completed cannot be accepted and cosmetic decoration items are not covered under the warranty with the builder.

Television, phone and internet

You may need to install a TV aerial, phone and/or internet connection. Aerials are already provided in some flats. Always use a suitable, competent professional to install these services.

Toilets and drainage

Do not flush anything other than toilet paper down your toilet. Even 'flushable' wipes can cause blockages.

Ventilation

Homes need air to breathe. So keep your home well ventilated and allow air to circulate:

- Keep window vents open
- Use the built-in extractor fans (your manual will explain how to adjust the speed)
- Keep your belongings away from walls and cupboards where there's less air flow.



Emergencies

Make sure you know how to turn off supplies and who to contact if you have an emergency at your home. For details, please see the 'Know your home guide' in the HUG folder. If you rent your home, please also see your sign-up pack.

If you report an emergency, we'll ask you to confirm your name, address, phone number and details of the problem. If necessary, we will then arrange an electrician, plumber or other tradesperson to visit and fix the fault.

We may charge you the cost of any work that is not a genuine emergency, or if the fault is due to damage or alterations made by you.

Please contact the current suppliers listed in the 'Know your home guide' in the HUG folder to take over the accounts from the day you move in, or to switch providers.

Gas leaks

If you smell gas, you should:

- Put out all flames, turn off the gas and open all windows so the fumes can escape
- Leave your home and call the **National Gas Emergency Service 0800 111 999** - it is essential that you use a phone outside of your home because using one inside, even a mobile, could spark an explosion.

Do not:

- Use any naked flames such as matches or cigarettes, or turn on any electrical switches or use any phone inside the home.

Loss of electrical power

- Turn off the power at the main switch (if it's safe to do so) and call 105 or visit www.powercut105.com to report a power cut or get the latest updates in your area. If it's just your property that is affected, please call us immediately.

Major plumbing problems (such as burst pipes or flooding)

- Turn off the water supply at the main stopcock (if it's safe to do so) and call us immediately.

If you need to report an emergency to us:
call 01993 890000

Inside your home

Some advice and help for living in and looking after your home. Staying safe and secure, and who's responsible for what.



Keep safe and secure

Your home has mains-powered smoke detectors (and carbon monoxide detectors if you have gas), with battery back-up in case of a power cut (see Smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarm instructions in the HUG folder). You should check these alarms are working properly at least once a week and contact us if there are any problems.

Some homes have fire escape windows (without locks), which we'll demonstrate when you visit your new home. Make sure everyone in your household and visitors know where these windows are and how to use them if there's a fire. Think about and plan how you would escape in a fire and make sure everyone in your home (including children) knows what to do.

Alterations or modifications to your home can affect how it behaves in a fire, so please get our permission and professional advice before making any changes.

The heating system installed in your home is the safest and most economical way to keep warm. Avoid storing anything next to your boiler and do not use portable gas heaters.

If your home has a loft, access should be for repairs and maintenance only. The loft is not designed for storage.

Make sure you insure the contents of your home adequately against loss or damage due to fire and theft. Thistle Tenant Risks and Great Lakes Insurance UK Limited, offer the My Home Contents Insurance Scheme, designed specifically for those living in social housing:

- www.thistlemyhome.co.uk
- 0345 450 7288

It's a good idea to take photos of valuable items, mark them with your postcode and house number and keep a note of serial numbers so they can be traced and identified if they're stolen.

Preventing fire

If you've moved into a flat, please read our fire safety advice leaflet in your sign-up pack for details.

To reduce the risk of fire:

- Never leave cooking unattended or leave children alone in the kitchen when you're cooking
- Take extra care when cooking with oil. Don't overfill chip pans or throw water on a chip pan fire
- Put out cigarettes properly in an ashtray and never smoke in bed
- Avoid overloading electrical sockets with 'cube' adaptors and extensions
- Only use electrical appliances with a British or European safety mark
- Keep electrical appliances clean and in good working order (for example, clear your tumble dryer filter regularly)
- Turn appliances off when they're not in use - don't leave them on standby
- Keep matches and lighters out of children's sight and reach
- Be very careful with candles - only use them in a proper holder and keep them away from curtains and anything that could catch fire. Never leave lit candles unattended, or children and pets alone with them.

If you rent your home, you must give us access and make sure all sockets are accessible for periodic electrical testing.



Going away?

When you're away from home:

- Lock all windows and remove/hide window keys
- Keep valuable items, like computers, phones and car keys out of sight and where they can't easily be found
- Cancel papers and other regular deliveries
- Ask a neighbour to collect and hold onto post and parcels
- Use a timer switch to turn on living room/kitchen lights in the evening, or turn on a radio during the day.



Home alterations, aids and adaptations

We understand that you may want to make changes to your home so it better suits your needs. An alteration is any change or addition you make, including electrical, gas or plumbing work. To keep you and your home safe, please make sure you get our permission before starting any work. Some changes will also need written approval.

If you're unsure whether permission is needed, or if you need any adaptations to your home, please refer to our Customer Charter or get in touch - we're here to help and will guide you through the process.

We won't increase your rent because of any improvements you choose to make, but you'll be responsible for looking after them once they're in place. It's important not to begin any work until all permissions are confirmed. If changes are made without permission, we may need to charge for repairs or for returning your home to its original condition, and we want to help you avoid this.

For more detail or to request permission, see: www.cottsway.co.uk/permission

Defects during the first year

The builder is responsible for faults due to materials, construction or workmanship for 12 months from the date your home was completed (excluding any damage caused by you and general wear and tear). Towards the end of this period, we'll inspect your home to identify any outstanding work that needs to be carried out.

Please:

- Tell us about any defects as soon as possible, so we can help you decide if they need attention straightaway, or if they can wait until the end-of-year check.
- Contact us before making any changes to your new home as this may invalidate the defect warranty. Landlord permission may also be needed. If you're renting, it's important to check your tenancy agreement for any restrictions too.

Other repairs and after the first year

Responsibility for other repairs and after the first year depend on whether you rent or own your home and what type of building it is.

- **Shared owners of houses** are responsible for all repairs.
- **Shared owners of flats** are responsible for everything inside the home, plus any land mentioned in the lease. Cottsway maintains shared and communal areas in blocks of flats.
- **Responsibility for repairs to maisonettes** depends on the design and layout of the building – check your lease for details.
- **Residents of rented homes** are responsible for minor indoor repairs (see the 'How to report a repair' leaflet in your sign-up pack for details). Cottsway looks after the structure and exterior of rented homes.

In addition, you are also responsible for:

- Repairs to your own fixtures / fittings, or damage caused by them
- Security alarms and other equipment
- Plugs on electrical equipment
- Curtain rails and fittings
- Lost or broken keys.

See our Customer Charter for repair categories, responsibilities, your obligations during repairs, and guidance on damp and mould issues.

Shared owners - warranty and repairs allowance

Shared ownership homes are covered by a new-build warranty for at least the first 10 years. Please refer to your warranty document and Shared Ownership Welcome Letter for the full terms and conditions, including details of any policy excess payable if you need to make a claim.

Depending on your lease type, your home may also come with a repairs allowance. This allows you to claim up to £500 each year for the first 10 years to help with the cost of repairing, replacing (if faulty), or maintaining items such as boilers, radiators, taps, sinks, baths and pipes.

This allowance only applies if:

- Your lease includes 'Schedule 6: The Initial Repair Period'
- You own less than 100% of your home.

For more details, including how to make a claim, contact us or visit:

www.cottsway.co.uk/repairsallowance

You can report and request a repair via:

- Our website: www.cottsway.co.uk/repairs
 Our customer portal: www.cottsway.co.uk/MyCottsway
 Email: contact@cottsway.co.uk
 Phone: 01993 890000

If it's about damp or mould or an urgent or emergency repair, please call us.

Working in your home

We need access to your home to carry out repairs, improvements, inspections and essential safety checks. You must provide access for defect repairs, the end-of-defects inspection, and any routine servicing. If defects are not reported promptly or we are unable to access your home, the defect warranty with the housebuilder may be affected. In some cases, you may be recharged if the warranty becomes invalid and the issue causes damage that we then have to repair.

When we visit your home, please:

- Allow us access at the agreed time.
- Keep the areas we need to work in clear and safe.
- Ensure an adult over 16 is present.
- Keep pets under control, especially dogs.
- Treat all workers with respect.
- Let us know in advance if you need help clearing the work area.

Missed appointments

If you can't make your appointment, please let us know at least 24 hours before so we can offer the slot to someone else. Missing two appointments in a row may mean a £40 charge.

Of course, we hold ourselves to the same standard. If we miss two appointments without letting you know, you'll get £40 compensation for the inconvenience.



Looking after your home

Some tips and advice on cleaning and maintaining different parts of your home - for more information, see our Customer Charter.

Lighting

- Do not try to open sealed LED lights such as downlights. If these fail, switch off the power, disconnect the bulb/fitting and replace with the same type of bulb/fitting. If you are unsure on how to do this, please contact us for advice.

Kitchen units

- Clean with warm, soapy water before wiping dry with a clean cloth.

Kitchen worktops

- Use heat-proof mats and a chopping board to protect your work surfaces, and try to avoid spilling liquids onto or near joints. Clean with a damp cloth and mild detergent. Do not use polish or bleach on laminated worktops.

Bathroom fittings

- Clean toilets, baths, basins and shower trays regularly with a non-abrasive cleaner to prevent staining and a build-up of deposits.
- To protect against Legionella, clean and disinfect your shower head every three months.

Doors and windows

- If it's your responsibility, paint or stain outside doors and windows regularly to protect them and stop moisture getting inside. Where Cottsway is responsible for external decorating, we will normally do this at least every 5-7 years.
- Keep hinges, latches and other moving parts clean and lubricated with Vaseline or a suitable oil.
- Wash glass inside and out at least every six months using a mild, non-abrasive detergent and soft cloth. Keep drainage holes, channels and spaces clear of obstructions with a soft brush.

Wall fixings

While you can put blinds and curtain rails up and secure freestanding units to the wall for safety (ideally avoiding party walls), **you must wait 12 months before fixing anything else to the walls.** Please use hanging strips for any pictures during this time. Remember to:

- Use a detector to check for hidden pipes or cables.
- Get advice from the DIY store about which sort of fixing to use for different sorts of walls and loads.
- Not fix anything to the party walls between your home and your neighbour.

Decorating

- **Wait at least 12 months before decorating, including wallpapering,** to give your new home time to completely dry out. Cottsway is not responsible for any damage to decorations carried out in the first year.

Floors and carpets

- Wash vinyl floors with warm water and washing up liquid or a non-abrasive cleaner.
- Use furniture cups or gliders to protect floor coverings.
- Slide heavy furniture and appliances using a carpet remnant (pile side down) underneath.
- Clean carpets with a liquid or spray, in line with the manufacturer's recommendations.

Alarms

- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors every week.

Loft spaces

- Do not enter the loft space in your home or use it for storage – the structure is not designed to carry extra weight. Roof insulation also means that joists are often not visible, so it's difficult and unsafe to walk on. Putting anything on top of the insulation will make it less effective in keeping your home warm.





Keeping your home free from condensation, damp and mould

Mould is caused by excess water and, in a home, is often the result of condensation. Mould can lead to problems which can damage the condition of your home and even affect your health.

New build homes take time to dry out.

However, there are some simple ways you can deal with condensation in your home by reducing moisture in the air, improving ventilation and using your heating efficiently.

Condensation comes from water in the materials used to build your home and it takes on average around 12 months for a new build home to fully dry out. During this time there is higher chance of mould growth because moisture levels inside your home will be higher than usual. New homes are designed to be well insulated and air-tight to meet current building regulations so it's harder for warm air and moisture to escape.

New build homes need good ventilation and gentle heating to prevent damp and mould issues, especially during the colder months. Mould growth in a new build property is unlikely to be accepted by the builder as a defect so it is important that you reduce condensation in your new home.

For more information download 'Moisture in new homes - a guide for occupants' from: www.nhbcfoundation.org/publications

What is condensation and what causes it?

Everyday things like cooking, washing, bathing and even breathing cause moisture, which is released into the air. The air can only hold a certain amount of water vapour - the warmer it is, the more it can hold. If this is cooled by contact with a cold surface such as mirror, a window or even a wall, the water vapour will turn into droplets of water - condensation. This is what happens when the mirrors mists up in the bathroom.

It is quite normal to find your bedroom windows misted up in the morning after a cold night. This does not mean there is a serious condensation problem.

If your home never seems to be free from condensation, or you have mould growth as well, the good news is that most problems with condensation and mould can be sorted out quickly if you reduce the moisture in the air.

Where does mould grow?

Mould can grow on any surface, so if you spot any mould it's important to take early action as it can spread quickly.

Mould can typically be found on or next to windows, in the corners and edges of rooms, and behind and inside wardrobes and cupboards (especially if they're against an outside wall).

Tips for reducing condensation



Produce less moisture

- Dry your washing outside whenever you can. If you dry clothes inside hang them in the kitchen or bathroom, but keep the door closed and the window wide open or an extractor fan on.
- Don't put wet clothes on radiators – using a drying rack is much better.
- Never use portable gas bottles or paraffin (flueless) heaters.
- Permanently vent your tumble drier to the outside of your home, using a suitable kit recommended by the manufacturer.
- While cooking, always cover pans and don't leave kettles boiling.



Heat your home

- If your home is not sufficiently heated, you're more likely to have issues with condensation.
- Keep your heating at a steady temperature (18-21°C). Find a setting that gives you the heat you need without increasing your heating costs.
- If you have thermostatic radiator valves, put them at a lower setting in rooms you don't use much, but don't switch off heating entirely.
- Avoid using alternative heat sources such as paraffin heaters, these can create more moisture into the air.



Improve ventilation

- When a room is in use, keep a small window and/or trickle vent open.
- Ventilate bathrooms and kitchens regularly.
- Keep bathroom and kitchen doors closed even if they have extractor fans.
- Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes – do not overfill wardrobes. If possible, locate wardrobes against internal partition walls.
- Leave a gap between the furniture and walls so air can circulate.

Reporting damp and mould

If you're a tenant and you've tried to reduce the moisture in your home and it's not working, or if you have a problem with severe condensation or mould, please call us immediately: **01993 890000**.

We're also able to offer support to our shared owners during the defects period.

For more information on how we respond to damp and mould, including our reporting processes and timescales, please see: **www.cottsway.co.uk/damp**



Outside your home

Essential information about site safety, external walls and your garden.

IMPORTANT!

Building site safety

There may be other properties still under construction nearby after you move into your new home. Building sites can be dangerous, so please make sure all your household members and visitors:

- Watch out for construction traffic when walking or driving
- Follow signs and directions to safe routes for pedestrians and vehicles
- Do not enter protected areas where work is going on, unless you have permission and report to the site office.

White marks on external walls

You may notice white, chalky deposits on the external walls and wooden surfaces of your new home. This is called efflorescence – a normal part of the building drying out. It's caused by natural salts in the structure being gradually released as the materials settle down. It's harmless and does not affect the stability or performance of the home.

Efflorescence will usually fade and disappear over time as it's washed off by rain. But you can reduce and remove it from walls using a dry brush or washing wooden surfaces with clean water and a soft brush.

Paths and drives

Please keep these clean and free of weeds and grass to prevent staining and trip hazards.



Outside taps

If you have an outside tap as part of your maintenance responsibilities*, you should run the tap each week during the warmer months to reduce the risk of Legionella.

It is best to isolate your outside tap during the winter months to prevent pipes freezing:

- Find the outside tap water supply - usually under the kitchen sink - and turn it off.
- Once turned off, open the outside tap fully to drain off the excess water. (Ensure any garden hoses / attachments are removed so that it can drain properly).
- Leave the tap open until the chance of frost has ended.

You may also wish to insulate your garden tap with a purpose made tap cover to protect it further.

* If you do not have an outside tap but would like one after the defects period has ended, you need to ask our permission before you install one: www.cottsway.co.uk/permission



Looking after a private garden

You must maintain any planting within the boundary of your property. The garden and landscaping around your home forms part of the agreed planning permission, so please check with us if you'd like to make any changes.

Follow these tips to keep your garden healthy and looking good:

Front garden

- Regularly watering and weeding your front garden is important, especially as it establishes. Should any planting perish due to lack of maintenance, you will be required to replace it.

Trees and shrubs

- Water newly-planted trees and shrubs thoroughly, and ask a neighbour to do this if you're away from home. New trees need lots of water to survive and grow.
- Check tree stakes and ties regularly to make sure they're still giving support, and remove them once they've done their job.
- Do not plant trees or shrubs close to your home - this can cause structural damage.

Lawns

There is a minimum of 100mm of topsoil under the turf to ensure that the new grass can grow. There will be some small stones within the topsoil which are essential for ground structure and effective aeration.

New lawns require a lot of maintenance until fully established and developers will not replace lawns that have not been maintained. Please:

- Wait 6-8 weeks before walking, placing heavy objects or allowing pets on your new lawn. This will allow the turf to settle and take root. Walking on the turf during this period can create dips and undulations which are difficult to remove.
- Water newly-laid turf regularly and thoroughly, especially during hot and dry weather. In summer we recommend daily watering in the morning or evening. After the first few weeks, water every few days during dry periods in mid-to late summer and every 5-10 days during dry periods at other times of the year.
- Once the grass has grown to about 50mm (2 inches) give the lawn an initial cut with the mower blades set to their highest setting. **This should be the only time you walk on your lawn in the first 6-8 weeks.** In the summer, lawn will do better if left a little longer (50mm or 2 inch) but later cuts can gradually be reduced to a final recommended cutting height of about 25mm (1 inch).
- Any bare patches that form can be treated with grass seed sown over raked soil. Shaded areas may struggle more than sunnier parts of the garden due to the lack of sunlight. Overseeding these areas with shade resistant seed in the spring can help.



Standing water / waterlogging

The subsoil underlying your lawn may vary in its drainage properties depending on the local soil type. Following heavy rainfall standing water can form which is normal and will reduce over time as the grass matures and helps with natural drainage.

If you report waterlogging to the developer, they may monitor the situation in the first instance to see if the problem reduces as the garden settles. You can also help by:

- Aerating the soil with a garden fork. Push the fork into the ground around 100mm (4 inches) deep and pull back a little, repeating across the lawn to make small holes. You can leave the holes as they are or brush sharp sand or fine horticultural grit into them. This will help to improve drainage.
- Avoiding walking on any waterlogged areas to prevent further compaction.

Services

How to use gas, electricity, water, heating and other supplies in your new home.

With a newbuild home, please be aware that it can take **up to 12 weeks** for utility companies to register your new address.

Gas (if applicable)

Your Gas Safety Record for your new home is provided in the HUG folder. Please make sure you know how to turn off the gas at the meter.

If you rent your home: you must let our engineers inspect and check the gas supply and appliances in your home at least once every year (see the gas servicing leaflet in your sign-up pack for details). If you have another type of heating such as an air source heat pump, access for other types of servicing will be needed.

For more information on gas servicing and maintenance, see our Customer Charter.

If you're a shared owner: you are responsible for maintaining and checking the safety of your gas installations.

Cookers, fires and other gas appliances can only be installed by a Gas Safe registered fitter. Always check that anyone working on gas in your home has a valid Gas Safe Card.





Electricity

Please see the Electrical Installation Certificate for your new home in the HUG folder.

Supply

- Check that you know where the electricity supply enters your home through the meter in the box outside or inside the property.
- Never tamper with the cables or meter.
- Make sure you know how to use the main on/off switch and circuit breakers on the consumer unit. Each circuit breaker is labelled to show what it controls (lights, cooker and so on).
- If a circuit fails, completely disconnect any appliance that you think might have caused the problem and try to re-set the relevant circuit breaker. If you then re-connect the appliance and it fails again, the appliance is faulty.

Wiring

- The wiring in your new home supplies both sockets and lighting. Wires to switches and power points usually run vertically behind the plasterboard. Use a cable detector and avoid fixing anything to the wall within 200mm of any switch or power point.

Lights

- Your new home has low-energy light fittings, which will reduce your energy bills. You are responsible for replacing all bulbs.

White goods

- Cookers, hobs, fridge-freezers and any other white goods provided in your home are low-energy rated models to benefit the environment and save you money.



Renewable energy

Air source heat pumps

- If your home has an air source heat pump, this will provide you with low carbon heating and hot water. Please read the guide provided in the HUG folder, which explains how to use your heat pump.

Solar panels

- Your home may have photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof. These will work automatically to generate green electricity.
- For safety, an additional smoke detector is fitted in your loft. This is linked to the other smoke detector(s) in your home and can be tested via a master test switch, usually located on your landing. You do not need to access the loft space.
- If you rent your home, you cannot claim a Feed in Tariff or Smart Export Guarantee for any excess electricity generated.

Electric vehicle charging points

- The parking space for your home may include an electric car charging point. If your parking space is directly connected to your home, this will be linked to your electricity supply. If your parking space is in a communal parking area, you may need to register to use the charging point.





Heating and hot water

Your heating and hot water system is controlled by the timer that's usually on or near to the boiler, and one or more thermostats to adjust the air temperature in different parts of the home. Please see the boiler user manual.

Radiators are balanced to suit your central heating system, but may occasionally fail to heat up because of a build-up of air pressure. To release this, carefully turn the valve at the top using a radiator key.

Repeated bleeding of radiators can reduce water pressure and cause your boiler to stop working effectively. If this happens or if your gas boiler shows an 'F1' fault, you can re-pressurise the system by using the filling loop and following the instructions in your manual. Disconnect the filling loop once you've repressurised the boiler, and if this doesn't solve the problem (or if the pressure is showing as too high), please contact us.

Water

Supply

- The mains supply to your new home is fed directly from the water meter to a stop-cock, which is usually located under the kitchen sink or nearby. Make sure you know where the meter and stop-cock are and how to turn off the supply if you have a leak or flood.
- The temperature of the hot water from your taps is restricted to prevent injury. This is a building control requirement for all new-build homes.

Legionella and water safety

Legionnaires' Disease is caused by legionella bacteria, which are found in the natural environment and may contaminate and grow in water systems, including domestic hot and cold-water systems. The bacteria survives in low temperatures and thrives between 20-45°C if the conditions are right. To help prevent this bacteria in your home please:

- Do not adjust the settings on your boiler or hot water system - these are set so your water is heated up enough to kill the bacteria.
- Ensure you turn on unused taps and showers and flush toilets at least once a week, including your outside tap if you have one.
- Clean, descale and disinfect your shower head at least every 3 months. (If you do not use your shower regularly, ensure it is turned on for at least five minutes each week).
- If your home has been empty for over 7 days flush your toilet twice and run your taps and shower for five minutes to flush the hot and cold water systems.

Waste

- Waste water from your kitchen and bathroom goes directly into the underground drainage system. You are responsible for keeping waste pipes and drains clear and sorting or paying for any blockages. Cooking oil and fat solidifies inside drains and builds up over time causing blockages.
- Do not flush anything other than toilet paper down your toilet or you will be charged for a repair if this is needed. Even 'flushable' wipes should not be put into the toilet and can cause blockages. Always dispose of paper towels, facial wipes, baby wipes and feminine hygiene products in a rubbish bin. Flushing large amounts of toilet paper can also block your toilet and drains.

Saving water

Please follow these tips to be water wise and save money:

- Fix dripping taps quickly – they can waste up to 90 litres per week
- Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth
- Wait until you've got a full load before using your washing machine or dishwasher
- Only fill the kettle with as much water as you need
- Keep showers to no longer than five minutes
- Use waste or rain water for your garden, and water plants in the coolest part of the day.

We value your views and would love to know what you think of our Home User Guide. If you have any comments or suggestions please get in touch.

Cottsway House
Heynes Place
Avenue Two
Witney
Oxfordshire OX28 4YG

E: contact@cottsway.co.uk

T: 01993 890000



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www.cottsway.co.uk/mycottsway