





A Home User Guide
to welcome you to your new home

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Quick guide

You've got the keys to your new home. Here's what you need to know and do straightaway. 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.

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.

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.**

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.**

Condensation

New homes are more vulnerable to moisture and mould. To protect your health and possessions:

- **Keep doors closed when cooking, showering or bathing to reduce moist air spreading around your home**
- **Avoid drying clothes indoors**
- **Cover pans when cooking, to reduce steam**
- **Keep window vents open**
- **Open windows as often as possible to allow moisture to escape**
- **Use the 'boost' mode if your extractor fan has one.**



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.



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.

Garden and parking

Check if you have any areas of garden or hard landscaping that you need to look after. These are not usually covered by the builder's defect warranty. If you have a parking space allocated to your home, the space(s) allocated are for your use only. Visitors are to park in visitor's bays which will be clearly marked.



Inside your home

Some advice and help for living in and looking after your home. Staying safe and secure, what to do in an emergency or if something goes wrong, 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 & carbon monoxide alarm instructions in Manuals and certificates**). 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 Insurance Services** offer competitive contents insurance (contact MyHome@thistleinsurance.co.uk or **0345 450 7288**). It's a good idea to take photos of valuable items, mark them with your post code 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 any 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.

Emergencies – call us on freephone 0800 876 6366

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 **Manuals and certificates**. If you rent your home, please also see your sign-up pack.



Emergency defects include:

- **Gas leaks**
 - > Don't use electrical switches
 - > Open all doors and windows
 - > Turn off the gas at the meter and don't use any gas appliances until they've been checked
 - > Call the **National Gas Emergency Service 0800 111 999**.
- **Loss of electrical power**
 - > Turn off the power at the main switch (if it's safe to do so) and call us immediately
- **Major plumbing problems** (for example, burst pipes or flooding)
 - > Turn off the water supply at the main stopcock (if it's safe to do so) and call us immediately.

When 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 Manuals and certificates** to take over the accounts from the day you move in, or to switch providers.

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.

Other repairs and after the first year

Responsibility for other repairs and after the first year depends 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.**
- **Rented residents 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.**



You are also responsible for:

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

To report and request a repair:

T 01993 890000
0800 876 6366 (Freephone)

www.cottsway.co.uk





Looking after your home

Some tips and advice on cleaning and maintaining different parts of your home:

● 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**

- > Before fixing anything to the walls in your home, 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.
- > Do not fix anything to the party walls between your home and your neighbour.

- **Decorating**

- > Wait at least 12 months before decorating 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.

- **Ventilation and condensation**

- > Keep window vents open and open windows as often and much as possible.
- > Try to keep your home to an even temperature – avoid it getting too hot or too cold.
- > Close kitchen and bathroom doors when using these rooms.
- > Cover pans while cooking.
- > Use the built-in extractor fans.
- > Do not use bottled gas or liquid fuel heaters.
- > Vent clothes dryers to an outside wall.
- > Keep furniture away from outside walls.
- > Leave cupboard doors slightly open and do not put damp or tightly packed items inside cupboards.

- **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.

Outside your home

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



Looking after your garden

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 significant changes.

If you have a private garden, please follow these tips to keep it healthy and looking good.

• Lawns

- > Water newly-laid turf regularly and thoroughly, especially during hot and dry weather.
- > Start mowing grass about a month after it's been laid, then regularly but not too closely. As a rough guide, cut twice a week during summer, once a week in spring, autumn and during prolonged dry spells. Remove clippings, except in hot and dry weather, when they will help to protect against drought.

• Trees and shrubs

- > Water newly-planted trees and shrubs thoroughly, and ask a neighbor 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.



Paths and drives

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

White marks

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.

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.**

Services

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

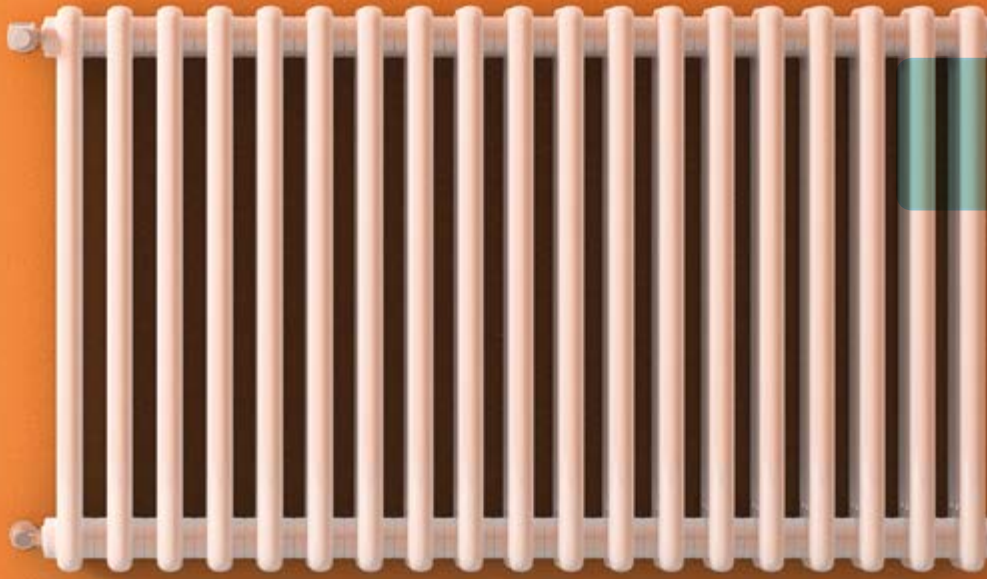
Gas

Please see the **Gas Safe certificate** for your new home in **Manuals and certificates**, and 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'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 **Manuals and certificates**.

- **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.



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.

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

● 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.

Liquid fuel (Calor Gas)

If required, set up an account with a suitable fuel supplier and make sure you keep the tank topped up throughout the year.



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 instructions in **Manuals and certificates**.

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 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.

Manuals and certificates

Important information about the fittings and equipment in your new home.

The following guides and details are enclosed separately:

Know your home guide

A plan of your home with parking space and garden highlighted

Site map

Gas Safe Certificate

Gas boiler instructions

Benchmark gas boiler commissioning checklist *(Shared owners only)*

Electrical installation and smoke / carbon monoxide certificates

Energy Performance Sheet

Room thermostat instructions

Smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarm instructions

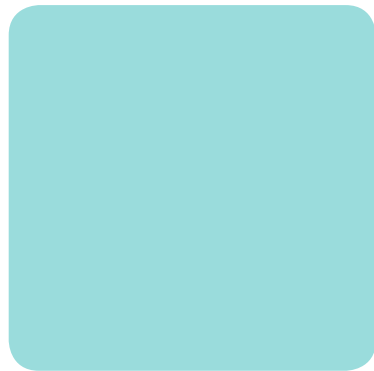
Bathroom extractor fan instructions

Kitchen extractor hood instructions *(If applicable)*

Oven and hob instructions *(Shared owners only)*

Water softener / descaler instructions *(If applicable)*

Warranties *(Shared owners only)*



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 with us on **01993 890000** or email us at contact@cottsway.co.uk

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