



This leaflet sets out some of the things that we can do and you can do to look after your home.

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## **FIRE**

Fire is one of the major dangers in the home. To reduce the risk of a fire starting and spreading in your home:

### **DO NOT**

- air clothes over or around unguarded fires, heaters or cookers,
- hang paper or decorations around light fittings or bulbs,
- overload electrical sockets,
- tamper with smoke alarms or remove batteries,
- store or use in your home petrol, paraffin, bottled gas or other similarly inflammable or potentially dangerous material or equipment,
- place lit candles on top of television sets or leave lit candles unattended in any room.

### **DO**

- close doors at night so fire cannot spread,
- make sure you and your family know the escape routes,
- report suspected gas leaks immediately,
- make sure you put out matches and cigarettes, and take care with ashtrays,
- put fireguards around fires,
- keep matches out of the reach of children.

If there is a fire, dial 999 and ask the operator to put you through to the fire brigade. Shut all windows and doors if you can. If you cannot put out the fire, leave immediately by the nearest escape route. Do not use the lift. Inform Innisfree immediately.

Tenants in shared houses should leave by the nearest escape route and, following fire instructions, assemble outside at the agreed meeting point.

Tenants of sheltered housing should 'stay put', unless the fire is in their own flat. The Fire brigade will rescue you if necessary.

## **DAMP AND CONDENSATION**

It is often difficult to tell the difference between structural damp and condensation. Condensation may appear as discoloration or black mould patches on walls or around your window frames and you may notice a damp or musty smell. It happens when warm damp air comes into contact with cold surfaces, such as walls and windows. It can affect your clothes, bedding, carpets, internal decoration and your health.

You can help to avoid or reduce condensation in the following ways:

- Keeping your home warm but well ventilated, including leaving some heat on low while you are out or away during cold weather.
- Keeping kitchen and bathroom doors shut during and immediately after washing, cooking or drying clothes.
- Opening the window during or immediately after activities that cause steam.
- Wiping down steamy windows, particularly if these result in puddles at the bottom.
- If you have an extractor fan, use it.
- If you have air vents in window frames, don't block them.

## **INSURANCE**

Innisfree only insures the fixtures and structures of our buildings. You are responsible for insuring the contents of your home and your personal possessions against fire, theft, flood and accidental breakages.

## **PESTS AND VERMIN**

If your home becomes infested with fleas, ants, mice or other household pests, contact your local Environmental Health Office (E.H.O.). They may deal with the problem, but may charge you for their service. Alternatively, they may advise you on how to deal with it yourself. If you see pests in your home or building you should also inform your Housing Officer.

Household remedies are also available from DIY stores, hardware shops and chemists. Read the instructions carefully as some remedies are not suitable for use near young children or people who suffer from asthma.

## **REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE**

### **Innisfree's obligations**

Innisfree has a legal obligation to carry out particular repairs to your home.

#### **1. Structural repairs that Innisfree is responsible for:**

Outside walls, outside doors and windows; stairs; ceilings and floors; plasterwork; pathways; boundary walls and fences; chimneys and chimney stacks, but not including sweeping.

#### **2. Repairs to Installations that Innisfree is responsible for:**

Innisfree must keep the following in reasonable repair and proper working order. Drains, gutters and external pipes; basins, sinks, baths, toilets, flushing systems and waste pipes; electrical wiring including sockets and switches, gas pipes and water pipes; water heaters; fireplaces, fitted fires and central heating installations and flues. Innisfree will not install, repair or replace showers in properties that have the use of a bath. This is because showers have a short life span and cost a lot of money to maintain.

#### **3. Repairs to Communal Areas that Innisfree is responsible for:**

Innisfree must keep common areas in reasonable repair and fit for use by tenants, their household members and visitors to the premises. These include the common entrance halls, stairways, lifts, and passageways and all shared parts of shared houses.

#### **4. Gas Safety Tests**

Innisfree also has a legal responsibility to carry out an annual Gas Safety Test to all equipment we provide. You are obliged to permit access to our contractors to carry out this very important health and safety test.

## Your Obligations

You must tell us about any repairs that are needed and are Innisfree's responsibility.

You must allow Innisfree or our contractors into your home to carry out inspections, repairs maintenance and servicing. We will give you at least 24 hours notice except in an emergency.

You are responsible for a number of minor replacements around your home. These include items such as:

- fuses, bulbs and tubes,
- small sanitary fittings e.g washers, plugs and chains, shower heads, toilet seats etc.
- locks and keys,
- floor coverings, washing lines.

These are examples. Please ask for a full list and note that the list may change from time to time.

You are also responsible for clearing sink blockages, bleeding radiators, taking care of the garden and for connecting and plumbing in your own appliances.

You must keep your home in a reasonable state of decoration. You do not need Innisfree's permission to redecorate inside your flat. However tenants of shared houses need Innisfree's consent if they wish to re-decorate. Innisfree takes responsibility to re-decorate shared houses as often as necessary.

You are expected to know how to operate electrical and mechanical equipment in your home. We will demonstrate or provide instructions when you first move in.

You should try to prevent an emergency repair from getting worse, or causing more damage, until help arrives. For example:

### **if you have a leak, try to:**

- place a bowl to catch the flow, or
- trail a string down to 'lead' the water into the bowl if it won't fit under, or
- turn off the stop tap, and
- place paper or cushions to soak up the water.

You may be able to avoid a repair call out, for example

### **If the electricity goes off:**

- ensure you've paid the bill!

- check that none of the fuses in the fuse box have 'popped out',
- push them in again if they have.
- Note, if this happens often you should check whether this is as a result of using a particular electrical appliance, and ensure it has the right fuse. Otherwise report the problem to Innisfree.

### **Or if the heating is not working:**

- check the switches and time clocks,
- check the instruction manual.

## Reporting repairs

If you need to report a repair, you should either phone or call at the office, telling staff, in as much detail as possible, what the problem and its effects are.

Outside office hours, you can report a repair that you think is an emergency, to our out-of-hours contractor, whose number is always available from Innisfree's answerphone message.

For **emergencies** outside office hours that involve gas, water or electricity, you should contact the appropriate emergency service given in the telephone directory under Gas, Water and Electricity. We will pay you back the reasonable cost of an emergency if the repair was Innisfree's responsibility and you provide a receipt.

## Repair categories and timescales

Your repair will be put into one of three types and we will tell you the timescale for attending to the problem. The repair types are:

**Emergency** - a situation that is (or is potentially) dangerous, a serious health risk an immediate risk to security, or where immediate action will prevent serious deterioration to the building. We aim to attend, at least to make safe, within 24 hours.

**Urgent** - problems that need attention to prevent further damage to the building or services and/or are materially affecting your comfort. We aim to attend and complete within 5 working days.

**Routine** - are those problems that are not urgent, even though they may cause inconvenience. If left unattended they will not cause harm or accidents, nor damage the building. We aim to attend and complete within 28 days.

Please ask for our detailed list of the types of repair that fall into each classification. We may re-issue this from time to time.

### **Carrying out the work**

Our contractor will phone you to arrange a time to do the repair. If you cannot keep an appointment, please contact the office immediately, as we may charge you for a wasted visit.

We monitor our contractors to check that they stick to the timescales above and to ensure a high standard of repair and courteous behaviour. Please help us by signing the contractor's attendance slip, and by completing the satisfaction card that we send you after the repair has been completed. This enables you to express your views.

### **Rechargeable repairs**

You are responsible for all items of repair that arise from wilful or careless damage or neglect that are caused by you, your family or visitors. Examples include:

- blocked drains, waste-pipes and WCs, caused by misuse e.g. nappies,
- windows, doors, locks, fixtures and fittings damaged or broken,
- damage caused by washing machines leaking or flooding,
- loss of front door keys, resulting in forced entry.

If we have to carry out repairs that have been caused in this way, or repairs that are your own responsibility, we will charge you for our costs. We will tell you this when we notice, or you report, the need for repair. If you prefer you can choose to do the work, or arrange and pay for it to be done yourself.

However, if we do this work for you, we will send you an invoice and allow you 21 days to pay. If you need to pay by instalments, please discuss this with your Housing Officer as soon as we send the invoice. If you don't pay, Innisfree may take your case to court.

If you tell us you don't know the person who did the damage, you will need to show us a crime number from the police; otherwise we may still charge you.

Please ask for our policy and procedure on rechargeable repairs.

### **Right to repair**

When you report a repair for which we are responsible, we will send you a copy of the works order. This will tell you by when it should be done. If we don't carry out that repair after you have asked us a second time, and the second promised response time has run out, you may be entitled to compensation. This only applies to repairs in the 'emergency' or 'urgent' categories. We won't pay compensation if the delay was caused by your failure to allow our contractor in, or by reasons outside our control.

Compensation is payable at £10.00 + £2.00 for each day the repair was overdue for the second time, up to a maximum of £50.00.

### **Planned work and regular servicing**

Some maintenance work must be done regularly, such as servicing boilers. Other repairs are done in batches of similar jobs in a planned programme. Examples include works to paths, fences or gutters. These are not included in the repair categories above. When we need to enter your home to do such works we will give you as much written notice as possible, usually 48 hours.

Major works or improvements always take time to plan, and we will involve you in decisions that affect your home, building or estate. These might include structural works to the building, kitchen replacement, re-wiring or external decoration. If we need you to move out, temporarily or permanently, we will help you all we can. We may provide compensation or allowances to cover costs. These allowances will not apply to shorthold tenants.

### **Repairs in new or newly re-habilitated buildings**

When a building is newly built, or has undergone major refurbishment, the contractor is responsible for all repairs, usually for the first year after completion. Sometimes the contractor will leave non-urgent jobs, for example, cracks in plaster, loose door knobs, etc., until the end of the contract. Staff will accompany the contractor on a final inspection, and it is important that you alert them at this time to any defects or faults you have noticed. Keep a list from when you first move in. Please do not wallpaper your new home until after this final inspection.

## **IMPROVEMENTS, ALTERATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS**

### **Carrying out improvements or alterations to your home**

If you want to carry out improvements or alterations to your home you must tell us about your plans and get our permission in writing before you start. By 'Improvements' we mean changes such as replacing kitchen cabinets or sanitary fittings, installing a shower or double glazing, fitting mains operated smoke detectors etc.

We will usually agree reasonable requests, unless the 'improvement' would:

- Make the home unsuitable for another tenant to move into if you leave;
- Make it less safe;
- Cost Innisfree more to maintain; or
- Reduce its value or appearance.

We may also impose conditions, require the improvement to meet certain standards, or require it to be completed within a certain time. We may ask you to check whether you need Planning Permission or to comply with Building Regulations.

If you carry out an improvement to your home you **may** be entitled when you eventually move on, to re-imburement for the works carried out. However you should note the following:

- Compensation can only be between £50.00 and £3,000 and will not cover the cost of exceptionally 'luxurious' items.
- The amount payable will reduce each year from the date the improvement was carried out, according to the expected lifetime of the work.
- You must have obtained three written estimates from contractors, explained why you selected the particular contractor and have received Innisfree's written permission before the work started.
- The compensation may be claimed during the notice period and must be claimed within 28 days of the tenant moving out.
- If you leave with money owing to Innisfree or fail to give us four weeks' written notice of leaving, we will credit any compensation to your rent account instead.

Please ask your Housing Officer for further information before you seriously consider improving your home.

### **Aids and adaptations**

We may be able to adapt a property or provide aids for you if you have a disability. This could include bath rails, a hoist or something more major. We will need a report from an Occupational Therapist (O.T.). O.T.'s can be contacted through your local Social Services Department or via a Doctor's referral. On receiving the report, Innisfree will seek funding to carry out the work. Contact the office for more information.



**Innisfree**  
Housing Association

A charitable Housing Association



**In business for neighbourhoods**