



SAFE HOMES

Housing Services

# Safety in your home



Advice about staying  
safe at home



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With common sense and awareness of where dangers are, most accidents can be prevented.

This booklet covers the most common causes of accidents at home. Follow the advice here and it is much less likely that an accident will happen to you. It tells you how to get advice and it also includes some useful telephone numbers.

We try to ensure that Council properties are as safe as possible. However, you are responsible for your own safety and for anyone living with you or visiting you. If you spot something which might be a safety hazard, please report it to us. Our contact details are on page 14.

To report any repairs that need doing, call the **repairs service centre** on **273 5555**.

## Security

A security light will help you see who is outside, but please make sure you ask us for permission before installing one.

- Fitting a door chain helps to stop anyone forcing their way in
- Put a strong lock on any sheds or garages
- If you keep any equipment in garages or sheds, cover it up or blank out any windows
- Make sure not to lock yourself out - we could charge to let you back in
- Ask to see the identification of any stranger calling at your home

All Council staff and authorised contractors carry identification cards with photographs. If in doubt, take their name and check with us, before letting them in.

## Fire

Keep gas bottles out of your home altogether.

- Fire doors stop smoke and flames spreading; always keep them closed. Close all doors when you go to bed. Any closed door will stop smoke
- Plan fire escape routes and keep them clear at all times
- **Smoke detectors save lives. They warn you when a fire starts, giving you time to escape, but they must be properly fitted and maintained. Make sure the batteries in the alarm are always working. Test them once a week. Change them every year. Vacuum inside the alarm every six months. You should have one fitted on every floor**

If you want advice about fitting smoke alarms please contact us.



- Do not leave rubbish or anything which can burn outside your home where it could be set on fire.
- Do not leave gas bottles or any flammable liquids lying around unsecured outside your home
- Chip pans can KILL! Never fill one more than a third full. Never leave one unattended on a cooker
- Chip pan fires can be put out with a damp cloth or by covering with the lid. Turn off the heat first. Leave for 30 minutes. Do not put water on burning fat or anything electrical
- Check for safety before going to bed. Switch off electrical appliances and check gas appliances. Close all doors when you go to bed or go out. This stops fire spreading
- Do not dry or store clothing or bedding or anything else on your central heating boiler



- **Make sure cigarettes are stubbed out and disposed of carefully. Never smoke in bed**
- Do not store flammable materials such as paint in the heater cupboard. This could cause a fire
- Do not clutter up your heater cupboard. This can make your heating work less effectively
- For further detailed information please refer to our Fire Safety Leaflet

# Electricity

## Plugs and sockets

- A single electric socket can only cope with a total of 3000 W - for example, a one-bar fire and a kettle. It is dangerous to overload it
- Plugs must always be wired carefully so you can't see any of the coloured wires
- Every appliance must have its own plug. Never push wires directly into a socket
- Don't plug appliances into light fittings. Always plug them into a socket
- Put covers over unused sockets to stop children pushing anything inside. You can buy them from most DIY and electrical outlets
- **Do not use tape to mend or join electric wires - use proper connectors**

## Fuses

Fuses protect people and equipment from shocks.

Always use the correct fuse for the appliance



## Electric Showers

If your home has an electric shower provided by the Council (this advice also applies to tenants' own showers) please read the following important safety information.

- Make sure that you read all the manufacturer's operating and maintenance instructions provided.
- Make sure you don't change the manufacturer's specified shower head for an alternative.



**IMPORTANT!** If you use a shower head not specified by the manufacturer, it could result in possible scalding from the shower unit.

- Report any faults to electric showers provided by the Council to the repairs service centre on 273 5555. **Do not attempt to carry out any repairs to the shower yourself.**
- Ensure that you clean the shower head on a regular basis to prevent poor performance and possibility of the hose head getting blocked. You can clean it with mild washing detergent or soap. Wipe dry with a soft cloth.

### **And a few more points for your safety...**

- You must not change any part of your home's electrical system without permission
- Use an approved electrician for all electrical work
- Always read and follow the instructions provided with any electrical equipment

### **If you think there is an electrical problem...**

- **Always switch off at the mains to be on the safe side**
- A smell of burning or a buzzing sound tells you that something is wrong
- Once you have switched the electricity off at the mains, report the problem to the repairs service centre on 273 5555
- Check flexes and appliances regularly for damage, loose connections, etc
- Hot plugs and sockets can electrocute you or start a fire, so faults must be dealt with quickly

If you cannot solve a problem, report it immediately to the **repairs service centre on 273 5555**

# Troubleshooting

If in doubt, switch off at the mains before you do anything else.

Problem	Cause	What to do
Plug extremely hot	Overloading/loose connection to the plug	Check. Fit a new plug but report any fault with the socket
Buzzing noise from plug or socket	Loose connection	Switch off and remove plug
Scorch marks on plug or socket	Loose connection	Fit a new plug. Report to repairs service centre
Fishy smell from plug/socket	Overloading/loose connection	Fit a new plug. Report to repairs service centre
Appliance goes on and off	Loose connection or break in flex	Remove and check plug. Have appliance checked by a qualified electrician
Lights flickering	Loose connection	Report to repairs service centre



# Gas

## **A free appointment that could save your life!**

Kier visits every Council tenant once a year to make sure that your gas fires and heating systems are working safely. They will contact you in advance to arrange a convenient time. Please don't miss this appointment - it could save your life, as well as that of your family and neighbours!

## **Gas servicing is compulsory**

If you don't let us carry out your gas check, you are breaching your tenancy conditions and we will take legal action. That is how seriously we take it. Tenancy condition 34 requires tenants to give our contractors access for gas servicing.

## **Why is it important to have gas appliances serviced?**

If they are not working properly, you will be at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide kills - you can't see it, taste it or smell it.

It can be given off by appliances which burn gas, oil, coal or wood that are faulty - or if the room is not properly ventilated or the chimney / flue is blocked.

## **What should you do to minimise the risks?**

- Keep your annual gas check
- Make sure your home is properly ventilated
- If you're buying a carbon monoxide detector, look for one which complies with BS 7860, although you should never rely entirely on these devices

If you smell gas or fumes, or suspect you have a leak, call the National Gas Service Emergency Line on **0800 111 999**.

## **Remember to have your own appliances serviced**

You must arrange to have your own gas appliance's serviced for example gas cooker's, gas hobs and gas tumble dryers. Portable gas heaters



are not permitted to be used. All work must be carried out by a competent GAS SAFE registered installer. This applies to any heaters, cookers, controls, pipe work, flues, air vents or other equipment associated with gas appliances.

## Gas leaks

If there is a strong smell of gas, or you think there might be a leak, you must contact the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999** and the repairs service centre on **273 5555** immediately. Turn the gas off at the mains but DO NOT switch on any electric lights if you suspect a gas leak. It might cause an explosion.

- Immediately shut off the main supply by turning the lever by the meter to horizontal
- Open all doors and windows to ventilate your home until the gas has gone
- Do not switch any lights on or off, light a match or smoke before all the gas has gone

- If the leak came from a cooker or fire that was not lit, remember to turn it off before you turn the mains supply back on again
- Remember to re-light any pilot lights when the gas is turned back on
- Do not use a mobile phone

Contact the repairs service centre immediately on **273 5555** if you suspect some problems with the gas supply or your appliances, for example:

- Sooty marks or yellow/brown stains around an appliance
- Increased condensation in a room with a working gas appliance
- An appliance burning with a yellow or orange flame not a blue flame
- Pilot light frequently going out
- A smell of gas



If you want to use a room with a gas appliance in for sleeping, you must obtain permission and confirmation from the Council Housing Service that it is safe, BEFORE using the room to sleep in.

If your home has an instant gas water heater, make sure that the room is well ventilated. Follow the manufacturer's instructions when using it.

Please contact us if you:

- Want the Council to maintain your gas appliances
- Think the gas appliances in your home have not been serviced
- Do not have a certificate confirming that they have been serviced in the past 12 months
- Want to install a new gas appliance or alter an existing one

**REMEMBER**, faulty appliances can produce Carbon Monoxide which is poisonous. You cannot smell it or see it. If it is inhaled it can be fatal. The first signs of carbon monoxide poisoning are:

- Fatigue or Flu-like symptoms such as nausea
- Headaches
- Erratic behaviour
- Chest pains
- Sudden giddiness when standing up
- Sickness, diarrhoea and stomach pains

If anyone experiences the above symptoms, leave the room quickly and go out into the fresh air. Go and see your doctor straight away. In an emergency call 999. If you suspect that an appliance is producing carbon monoxide, switch it off and ventilate the room. Report it immediately to the repairs service centre.

# Windows and glazing

If you have any window safety catches, make sure they are secure and working properly, particularly if you live in a high-rise block. Do not change them or remove them.

- Report any broken glass immediately
- Always use the handles to open or close windows - never push on the glass
- **If you can't open a window because it is stuck or faulty, contact the repairs service centre**
- If you want to change any windows, glass doors or other glazing, you must get permission first from Sheffield City Council
- Keep away from windows any chairs, boxes, large plant pots and other things that children could climb on

- Proper ventilation is important for your health and safety. Make sure windows can be opened and vents are not blocked up or closed
- If one of your windows is for fire escape, make sure you can use it in an emergency. Tell everyone in the family where the keys are
- Do not put plant pots on window sills

Make sure your doors, especially the outer doors, are in good condition, including the locks and hinges.

- Report any defects immediately
- Tell everyone in the family where the keys are. Keep a spare key in a safe place. There could be a charge if we have to change the lock
- Close all doors when you go to bed or go out. This stops fire spreading



## Rubbish

- Use rubbish chutes with care. Do not try to take the lids off - they are heavy and dangerous
- **Dispose of bulky items (furniture, carpets, big boxes, etc) by contacting Veolia on 273 4567. Don't just dump them, or try to use rubbish chutes**
- Hazardous materials like oil and chemicals must be disposed of separately. Some recycling centres have oil disposal points. Otherwise contact the Environment Agency on (08708) 506506

Sheffield City Council is committed to recycling. Where recycling facilities are available please use them in accordance with the instructions.

## Building work

From time to time Housing Services will need to carry out repairs and improvements to your home and the area around it. Your co-operation will help to make sure this work is completed safely.

- A building site is not a playground, so children must be kept away. They need to understand how dangerous a building site can be
- Don't let children climb on scaffolding
- If temporary fencing or boarding round the site is damaged, please contact us
- All staff working for the Council have identity cards with their photographs on and will expect to show them to you

**If they do not have an ID card, do not let them into your home, but report them to us.**

## Outside your home

Keep your garden, paths, fences and any outside buildings (garages, sheds and greenhouses) tidy and in good repair so they are not a danger to others.

- Report any defects which could injure someone - sharp pieces of metal, missing grate covers, uneven or damaged flagstones, for example
- It is against your tenancy conditions to leave cars on jacks or bricks in your garden
- PONDS. You need special permission before they are built. They must be securely fenced off
- GARAGE PITS. You also need permission. You must make sure people cannot fall into them. Cover the hole with wood battens or metal sheets strong enough to hold them
- BROKEN GLASS in greenhouses, sheds and garages must be replaced

## Water leaks

If you find a serious water leak, turn the supply off at the mains tap immediately. It is usually under the sink but sometimes it can be somewhere else.

Make sure you know where the mains water stop tap is. We can tell you.

- If the water leak could come into contact with anything electrical, switch the electricity off at the mains as well
- Turn on all the taps in the kitchen and bathroom to drain the pipes more quickly
- Report it to the repairs service centre. The electricians may need checking



# Water safety

If you have been away from home for more than a few days, on your return, run both the hot and cold water taps for around two minutes before using them. This should get rid of any Legionella bacteria that may have built up in the pipes. Run the cold water to remove

any standing water in the system and run the hot taps at a high temperature to kill off any bacteria. If you have a shower, run that for about two minutes at a high temperature as well. Also flush the toilet.

## EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**EMERGENCY HOUSING REPAIRS** (0114) 273 5555

### STREET LIGHTING

Street Force Call Centre (24 hours) (0114) 273 4567

**GAS LEAKS** (0800) 111 999

**ELECTRICITY** (0800) 375 675

**LIFT BREAKDOWNS** (0114) 273 7693

### WATER

Yorkshire Water (0845) 124 2424

Severn Trent Water (0800) 783 4444

### POLICE, FIRE AND AMBULANCE

All emergencies only 999

All police stations (0114) 220 2020

Fire stations (0114) 272 7202

# Contact Housing Services



**Phone:** Call Centres 0114 293 0000  
0114 205 3333  
Repairs 0114 273 5555



**Online:**  
**Enquiries:** [www.sheffield.gov.uk/contacthousing](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/contacthousing)  
**Website:** [www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing)

Follow us:   



**Write:** Council Housing Service  
PO Box 483  
M33 0DH



**Visit Us:** To find your local office please telephone us or alternatively you can visit our website and search for your local office using our interactive map.

Some calls may be monitored by Sheffield City Council and its partners for quality and training purposes.



# Need help accessing our services?

A translation of this leaflet is automatically available in the languages below. It can also be made available in other languages on request.

Arabic

تتوفر نسخة مترجمة من هذه الكراسية باللغة العربية

Farsi

ترجمة ان برگچه در فارسی دستیاب است

Somali

Turjibaanka guub-yarahaan waxaa lagu heli karaa Soomaali

This document can be supplied in alternative formats, please contact 0114 293 0000

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[www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/councilhousing)



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