

For further information, contact:
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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call the Private Sector Housing Service on: 01432 260757 or e-mail psh@herefordshire.gov.uk

Maintaining your home

A brief guide for property owners

Private Sector Housing
Promoting warm and safe homes in Herefordshire

designed by communications, 'Brockington', 35 Hafod Road, Hereford, HR1 1SH



As well as being your home, your property is your biggest financial investment. It makes sense to look after it properly as this will help protect your investment and save you money in the long run.

This leaflet gives you general advice on maintaining your home to help avoid damage to the property as well as helping identify when work does need to be carried out. The information in this leaflet is not meant to cover all possible problems. If you have concerns or do not feel confident in identifying a problem or how to deal with it you should contact a builder or tradesperson with a good reputation.

Insurance

It is very important that you insure the building as well as the contents. Make sure that the cover you have includes the costs of a full re-build. You should also make sure that, when carrying out repairs and so on, you do not break any of the conditions in your buildings insurance. If you do and something goes wrong, your insurance will not be valid.

- families who receive income-related benefit and have children under sixteen people who receive certain types of disability benefit.
- The grants cover installing insulation and heating improvements. For more information telephone:
Freephone 0800 316 2814

Home Improvement Agency - You at Home

The Home Improvement Agency works with older and vulnerable people and offers a range of services to homeowners including advice on grants and benefits. It also offers some maintenance services.

For more information telephone:

01432 260710

email yah@herefordshire.gov.uk,

or write to: Home Improvement Agency,
84 Whitecross Road, Hereford, HR4 0DH

Registered Contractor List

Herefordshire Council's Private Sector Housing team has a list of registered contractors available to all residents in the county.

Visit our website

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/psh or for more information telephone: 01432 260746.

You may have problems selling your home if you do not have the right electrical safety certificates. From April 2005, any new gas boiler must be a condensing boiler, and a Gas Safe engineer must install it. You will need to have gas certificates if you sell your home.

- Have heating systems serviced every year.
- Electrical wiring should be checked every five years.
- If any appliance is not working properly, stop using it and have it checked out or replace the item.
- If any electrical socket or switch is sparking or shows burn or scorch marks call in a qualified electrician.

Advice and information

Financial Assistance (eg. grants and loans)

If you are on a low income we may be able to offer help for home improvements. We may also be able to supply adaptations to help disabled people live independently in their homes. Contact Private Sector Housing for more details on 01432 260710 or write to Private Sector Housing, 84 Whitecross Road, Hereford HR4 0DH e-mail psh@herefordshire.gov.uk

Warm Front scheme – for owners and private tenants

This scheme gives grants to:

- older people who receive income-related benefit

Electrical work

A new law came into force in January 2005. An approved electrician must now check any electrical work other than very basic tasks (for example, wiring a plug and changing fuses and light bulbs) and issue an electrical certificate showing that the work is of a satisfactory standard.



Planning

Spend a little time drawing up a schedule for carrying out maintenance inspections and work on your home and, as long as you carry out the tasks you have scheduled, you will reduce the chances of needing to carry out emergency repairs.

This can also help reduce costs and will help you to spread the cost of looking after your property.

There are three stages to planning maintenance work:

- 1 Plan the work, taking into account the time of year and weather conditions.
- 2 Consider whether you have the skills and knowledge needed to carry out a particular task. If you do not have the skills you will need to employ a professional.

- 3 If you live in a conservation area or your property is a listed building you may have to get permission from the relevant authorities before carrying out any alterations and repairs.

You may also have to use specific materials to do the work. Contact our Planning Department for more information.

Plan the amount of time you will need to finish the work. Plan the cost of the work (for example, materials and tools.) There may be specialist equipment you can use (buy or hire) which will make the task easier and quicker.

Home Maintenance checklist

The list below will help you plan your home maintenance schedule.

1 Roof, roof space and chimneys

- A pair of binoculars is a useful aid when checking the roof.
- Check for slipped tiles or slates especially after storms and high winds that can damage roofs.
- Make sure the chimney is not leaning or needs re-pointing (replacing any missing or loose mortar between the bricks).
- Check to see if the pots are loose.
- Check the flashing is in place.
- Regularly check and repair flat roofs. These will need replacing every 15 years or so. Do not walk on flat roofs as this can damage them.

- Make sure no soil or rubbish has collected above the level of the damp proof course (if you have one).
- To prevent condensation you can take the following precautions.
- Dry clothes outside as much as possible.
- Keep rooms warm.
- Don't close or block air vents.
- Run cold water into a bath before putting in the hot water.
- Keep lids on saucepans and don't let kettles overboil.

10 Gas and electricity

In January 2005, the Government brought in a new law to help reduce injuries and fatal accidents caused by poor electrical work. This means that if you have any electrical work carried out, such as rewiring of a circuit or any electrical work carried out in the kitchen, bathroom or other areas mentioned in the new law, the work must be carried out by a suitably qualified electrician. The electrician must be registered to carry out the work, or you will need to get Building Regulation Approval from Building Control. Once the work has been carried out to the correct standards and inspected, you will be given a certificate. Use qualified Gas Safe fitters and electricians registered with an appropriate competent persons scheme.

7 Decorating

- Check the condition of the paintwork inside your home.
- Check the condition of wallpaper. If the paper is lifting but is not too far gone stick it back down using wallpaper paste.
- Check the condition of tiles and grout, and replace it or clean it as necessary. If there are any signs of damp on the inside walls, you will need to try and find out the cause and repair as necessary. Condensation can be a problem and is often a result of lifestyle. Please contact us if you require more information on this subject.

8 Plumbing

A few simple tasks will help prevent burst pipes and floods.

- Check you know where the stopcock (stop tap) is.
- Check the stopcock is not stuck.
- Insulate pipes in non-heated areas.

9 Damp and condensation

Damp and condensation can seriously affect the building as well as the health of those who live in it. Damp is often found in old basements. If you think you have a problem with damp, call in a specialist who will tell you what you can do.

- Keep air bricks clear.
- Check that air vents in rooms and on windows actually work.

- Do not let any casual callers carry out any work or repairs on your home. Even if they charge you less than a professional builder, you may well pay more in the long run and, if anything goes wrong, you may not be able to get compensation.
- Check to make sure you have enough roof insulation.
- Make sure the roof space is properly ventilated.
- Check inside the roof space for signs of leaks and so on. Replace or repair tiles or slates as necessary.

2 Gutters and drainpipes

- Once a year (after the leaves have fallen is best) clear out, by hand, any leaves and other rubbish in the gutters.
- Check to make sure there are no leaks or missing sections along the gutters and that they are not sagging.
- Check that the drainpipes are flowing freely and are securely fixed to the wall.
- Check for leaks (when raining or water is flowing through the gutter or pipe).



3 Brickwork

- Brickwork Don't forget to check brickwork on garden walls and garages too.
- Re-point (replace any missing or loose mortar) bricks as necessary.
- Replace any damaged bricks.
- Repair any damaged rendering (plaster coating).
- Large cracks in the brickwork may mean there is a problem with the structure of the building especially if the cracks get bigger.
- If you do see large cracks, call in a professional (for example a chartered surveyor or structural engineer) straight away who will be able to tell you the cause as well as what needs to be done to correct the problem.

4 Windows and doors

- Check window and door frames, locks, catches and window stays regularly. This will help keep your home safe. Replace damaged locks, catches and so on to help keep your house secure.
- Protect wooden frames and sills with paint or varnish, which should be renewed every three to five years depending on the effects of weathering.
- Repair any damaged woodwork before applying protective paint or varnish.

- Check the putty is still solid and holding the window glass in place. Replace it if it is crumbling.
- Replace cracked or broken panes of glass straight away.
- Window and door frames can distort with age and the effects of the weather. If this is a serious problem, you might want to consider replacing them.
- If you are a leaseholder wanting to change windows and doors you must get permission from the freeholder.

5 Security

- Upgrade your door locks to help increase security.
- Fit window locks.
- Remove or cut back any bushes that may give cover to burglars.

6 Fences

- Talk to your neighbour who may be interested in sharing the costs and work with you.
- Check your fences after storms and high winds.
- Treat with wood preservative every two years.
- Replace rotting fence panels and posts.

Safety tip – choose a preservative that is nontoxic to plants, pets and children. Make sure you follow the instructions on the tin.