Inspecting a property

Nancy Witham

Aims and Objectives

- Be aware of Landlord legal obligations and Legislation
- Be able to effectively prepare for an inspection
- Understand the importance of an Inspection routine
- Be able to confidently diagnose common defects and potential problems
- Understand the common causes of Damp
- Recognise Hazards
- Effectively record your findings

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What is a property inspection?

- The primary purpose of an inspection is to evaluate the overall condition of a property
- To visually check if everything is in good working order and in a reasonable state - both the interior and exterior.
- It's also the perfect opportunity to ensure your tenants are looking after the property under the terms of their tenancy agreement

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What are the various reasons why we inspect properties?

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REASONS FOR INSPECTIONS

- Repairs & Maintenance issues reported
- Tenancy Audit
- End of a Tenancy or Lease
- Mutual Exchange
- Stock Condition Surveys – Planned Works
- HHSRS Survey
- Specifying Aids & Adaptions
- Snagging – New build

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Why Inspections are Important

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Landlords are legally obliged to keep their properties and Communal areas in a decent state of repair

They must be able to demonstrate a regular and effective inspection regime in order to deal with Legislation, Health and Safety compliance and any civil injury claims

Inspection Clauses in Tenancy Agreements

The Landlord reserves the right to enter the Property at any reasonable time on giving not less than 24 hours' prior notice to the Tenant

- to inspect the condition and state of repair of the Property
- to carry out the Landlord's obligations under this agreement

Under **Section 11** of the **Landlord and Tenant Act 1985**, it states that it is the landlord's legal obligation to:

- keep the structure and exterior of the property in good repair, including drains, gutters and external pipes
- keep installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity and sanitation in good repair and proper working order
- keep installations for space heating and water heating in good repair and proper working order

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Decent Homes Standard

Housing Act 2004

To meet the Decent Home Standard, your council or housing association home must:

- meet the HHSRS minimum safety standards for housing
- be in a reasonable state of repair
- have reasonably modern facilities and services
- have efficient heating and effective insulation

Any property that does not meet all four criteria is deemed to have failed the standard.

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Homes Act 2018 – Fitness for Human Habitation

- Came into force on 20 March 2019
- Requires Social and private landlords to ensure that their property, including any common parts of the building, is fit for human habitation at the beginning of the tenancy and throughout.
- It allows tenants to be able to take their landlord to court without having to rely on their local authority, as the Local authority may also be the tenants Landlord.
- The Court can make an order requiring the landlord to take action to reduce or remove the hazard, and / or damages to compensate them for having to live in a property which was not fit for human habitation.

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Inspection Clauses in Tenancy Agreements - Wales

Under **Section 92** of the **Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016**, it states that it is the landlord's legal obligation to:

- keep the structure and exterior of the property in good repair, including drains, gutters and external pipes
- keep installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity and sanitation in good repair and proper working order
- keep installations for space heating and water heating in good repair and proper working order

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Welsh Housing Quality Standards 2002

All social landlords are expected to:

- Have up to date information on the condition of their stock & a planned maintenance & improvement strategy based on this information.

All social homes must be:

- In a good state of repair
- Safe and secure
- Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated
- Contain up to date kitchens and bathrooms
- Well managed
- Located in attractive and safe environments
- Where possible, suitable for the specific needs of the household

HHSRS was introduced to replace the previous 'Fitness Standards'- no Cat 1 hazards

Full compliance refers to dwellings where the WHQS is achieved for all individual elements - Properties are either a pass or a fail

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Renting Homes Wales Act 2016
comm 1st Dec 22 (Fitness for Human Habitation)

- Requires Social & private landlords to ensure that their property, including any common parts of the building, is fit for human habitation at the beginning of the contract and throughout.

In addition there must be

- Smoke alarm on every floor connected to the Elec supply– in good repair & working order.
- Carbon monoxide alarm – in good repair & working order - is in each room of the dwelling which contains a gas appliance, an oil-fired combustion appliance or a solid fuel burning combustion appliance
- Valid electrical condition report during each period of occupation - remains valid for 5 years

Tenancies which existed before 1 December 2022 have 12 months to comply

- Contract holders can take their landlord to court without having to rely on their local authority

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Scotland

Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) Feb 2004 - further updated 2011 – similar to Decent Homes Standard

It means social landlords must make sure their tenants' homes:

- are energy efficient, safe and secure
- not seriously damaged
- have kitchens and bathrooms that are in good condition

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Scotland

The Tolerable Standard – Housing(Scotland) Act 1987 **–** similar to Homes Act 2018

This is the basic statutory minimum standard for all housing in Scotland

- A house which is below this standard is considered to be unfit for human habitation.

- If a dwelling is below the Tolerable Standard, local authorities have a duty to take action to close it, demolish it, or bring it up to the required standard

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Ireland

Section 18 - Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1992

- the maintenance of the house in a proper state of structural repair and in good general repair - roof, floors, ceilings, walls and stairs in good repair and not subject to serious dampness or liable to collapse
- the quality and condition of the accommodation, any common areas, furnishings and appliances;
- ventilation and lighting;
- water supplies, sanitary facilities and drainage;
- facilities for heating and cooking;
- facilities for the storage and the preparation of food.

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Ireland - Housing (Standards For Rented Houses) Regulations 2019

The property must be:

- In a proper state of structural repair' means sound, internally and externally
- Not defective due to dampness or otherwise.
- *Sanitary Facilities* - be maintained in a safe condition and good working order

Heating Facilities

Food Preparation and Storage and Laundry

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Other Reasons Landlords find inspections useful

Inspections are a major part of ‘managing a property’ and are valuable for both Landlords and tenants to:

- Assess tenants living conditions
- Spot Illegal activities
- Help to build a relationship with your tenant

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Assessing tenants living conditions

- Perfect opportunity to ensure the property is being looked after under the terms of the tenancy agreement
- Check for Unauthorised Occupants
- Safeguarding issues

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Spotting illegal activities

- Some of the most destructive tenants are the best payers because they want to keep their landlord away from the property so they can conduct illegal activities
- Do not assume the best tenants come packaged as just timely payers

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Helps to build a relationship

Not enough Landlords value the relationship with their tenant

- Inspections are a perfect opportunity to simply ‘catch up’ with your tenant

- They are your eyes and ears on the ground

It is important to make regular inspections but not too many – could be deemed as harassment

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Property Inspection – Best Practice

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- There should be a comprehensive Inspection template or App to ensure that nothing gets missed

- All officers should be using the same resources.

Estate(s) Inspected	Block or Door Nos.	Block or Street Name	Ward

Items	Inspected Yes/No/N/A	Items	Inspected Yes/No/N/A
Roof Access Secure		Drains And Gulleys Clear	
Tank Room Secure		Paving/Walkways/ Flooring (Check For Tripping Or Slipping Hazards)	
Elec Intakes Secure		Estate Roads	
Fire Doors/Exits		Grass Cutting, Trees, Flower Beds, Hedges	
Communal Lighting		Communal Door Entry System	
Communal Glazing & Window Frames		Abandoned Vehicles	
Dry Risers		Parking/Garage Areas	
Lightning Conductors		Sheds	
Dust Chute Hoppers		Graffiti	
Refuse Chutes Clear		Estate Signs	
Refuse Chamber Area		Play Areas	
Overflows & Leaks		Internal Communal Repairs	
Bulk Refuse Removal		External Communal Repairs (Such As Walls And Fences).	
Lifts [illegible]		Sheltered scheme common rooms and communal facilities	
CCTV		Recycling facilities	

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Importance of an Inspection Routine

External Communal Areas - Paths / boundary walls / fences / Play areas / Bins / Drainage / Trips and Falls

Fabric of the building

Visually start at the top of the building then work your way down

- Roof
- Rainwater Goods
- Exterior walls
- Windows
- Main Entrance Door
- Gulley's / Drains

Interior – Room by room

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Common repairs and defects

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It is important to understand the repair and ask the right questions so that we can pass on accurate information to the contractor

Most common repairs fall into one of these major trades:

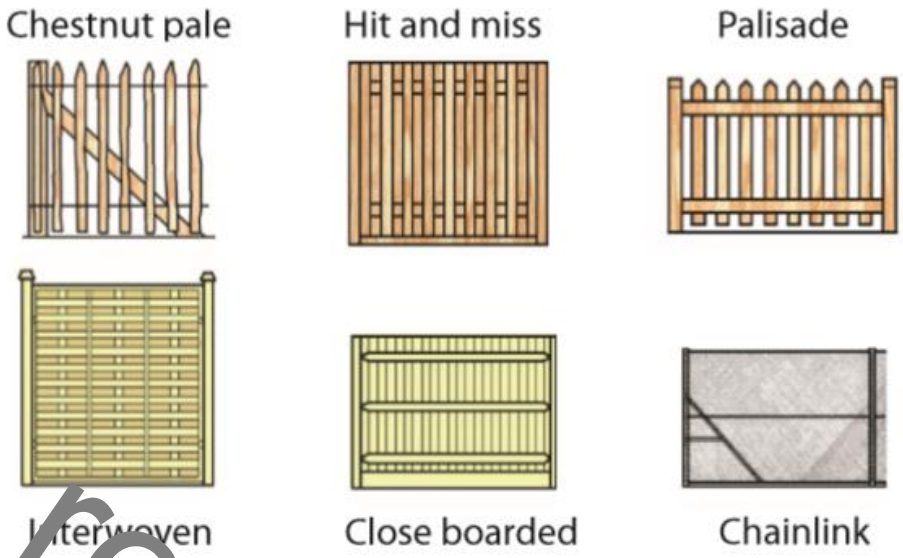
- Brickwork
- Roofing
- Carpentry
- Plumbing & Drainage
- Electrical

When you arrive at the property complete a visual exterior inspection

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Perimeter Fencing and Gates

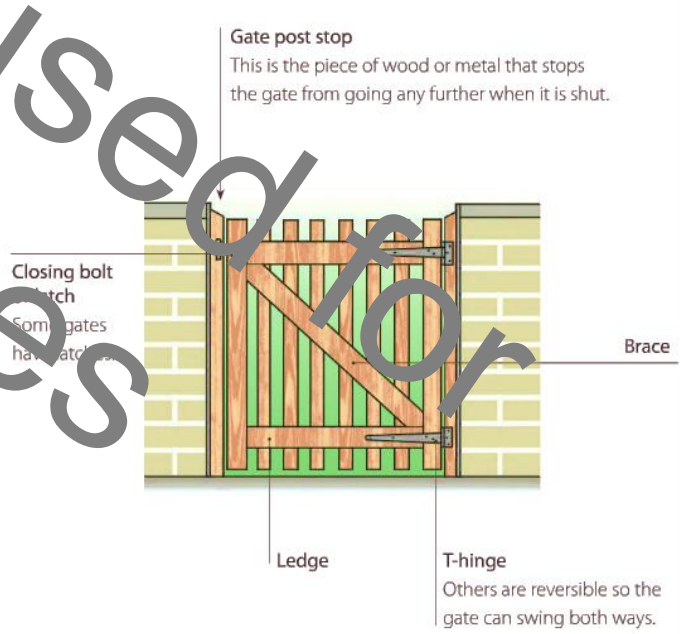




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What you need to check:

- Is it dangerous
- What is the fence or gate made of
- What type of fencing is it?
- Are you able to open/close any gates?
- Which part of the gate is broken?



Trip Hazards

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Raised levels around drainage







Broken or lifted Flagstones



Uneven Kerbs or Steps





What to Check

- What is the hard surface made of – slabs, concrete, tarmac
- How many slabs are loose/cracked?

What else you might need to do

- If H&S risk - Arrange for the area to be cordoned off until contractor arrives
- Upgrade priority of repair

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Drainage





Blocked drains can cause manholes to overflow









Collapsed drains

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Gardens and Communal Landscaping

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Private gardens, yards or balconies





Communal Gardens

- Is the gardens being maintained
- Check that any trees and branches are not dangerous

Sheds, Outhouses and Bike Storage – What to check







- Is the structure sound
- Is there any damage / ASB
- What is the structure made of

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Roofing

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Roofs







What to Check:

- Are any tiles or slates missing, damaged or slipped?
- Are the ridge and hip tiles complete?







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Flashing

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What to Check:

- Has any of the flashing come loose?
- Is the flashing complete?

Fascia's and Soffits

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What to check:

- Is the fascia and soffit boarding complete?
- Are there any gaps where birds may access?
- Are there any rotted sections

Rainwater Goods

Rainwater goods are all of the components that take rainwater away from a property:

- Gutters
- Downpipes
- Gulleys

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Rainwater Goods - What to check

- Are there any visible leaks or blockages?
- Do the gutters appear secure and are they falling in the right direction?
- Are the rain water downpipes vertical and adequately fixed?
- Are all the gutter stop ends in place?

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Brickwork

Pointing Defects





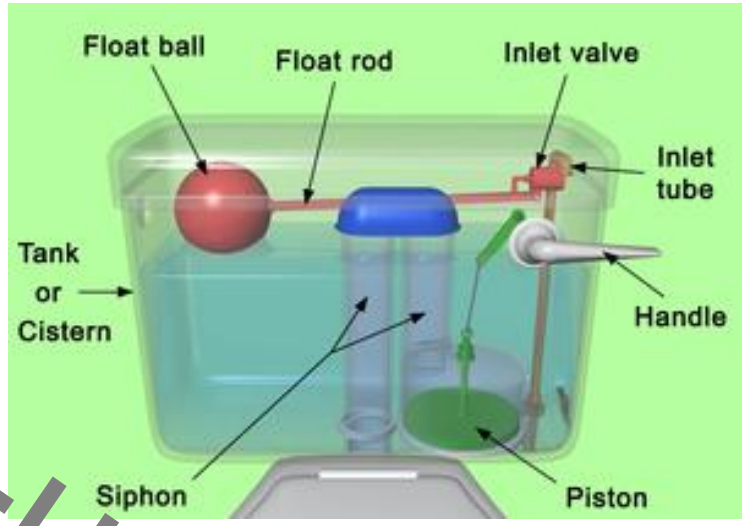
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Water running from the overflow

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External Windows

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External Windows

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What to Check:

- Is the putty or beading in place
- Have the window surrounds been sealed with mastic?

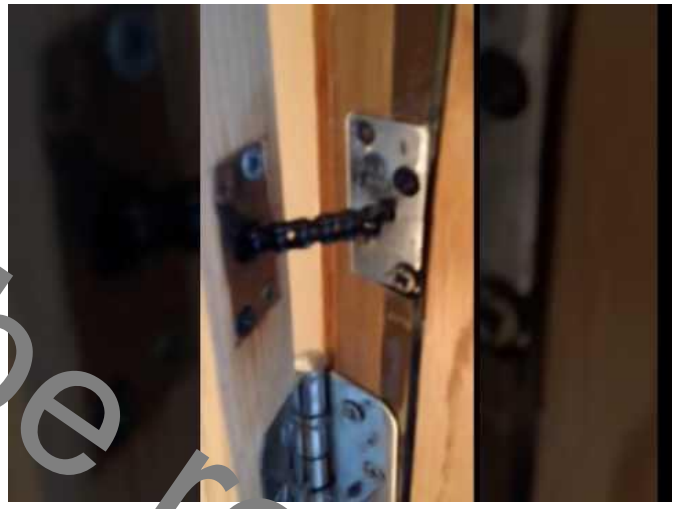
External Doors

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External Doors - Communal

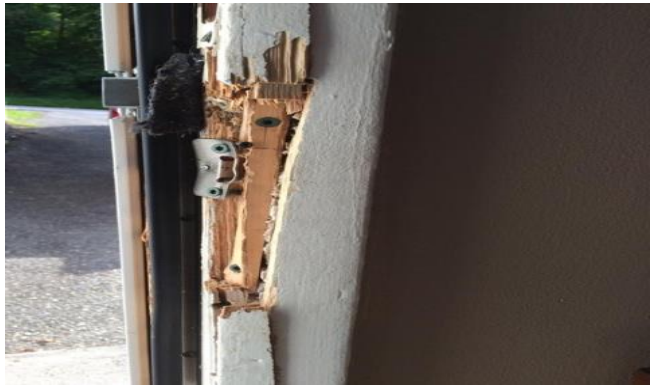
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What to Check:

- Do the door closers work properly?
- Are the hinges secure and in place?
- Does the door entry system work?
- Is there any signs of damage?

External Doors

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- Is there an even gap between doors & frames?
- Is the door frame surround sealed with mastic?



- Do latches, locks and bolts work properly?
- Does the door bell work?
- Do the outside lights work



- Is the mobility threshold free from damage?

Internal Inspection

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Floors – What to check

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Timber – loose / damaged





Concrete – cracks in surface?





Floor covering – lifted, fitted correctly?



Sealant around skirting board

Stairs

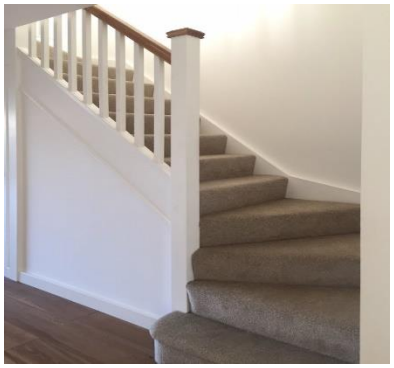
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Are handrails, bannisters and spindles securely fixed?



Is the newel post stable?







Is the stair nosing intact and undamaged?

Internal Doors

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Internal Doors

What to Check

- Is there any damage to the door or the frame?
- Do doors open and close properly?
- Is the door furniture intact
- Are skirting door stops still in place?









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Windows

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Windows







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What to Check

- Is the frame free from damage?
- Are there any cracks or breakages on the glass
- Do the trickle vents open and close properly?
- Are the windows sealed on the inside with silicone?

Window fixtures and fittings









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What to check

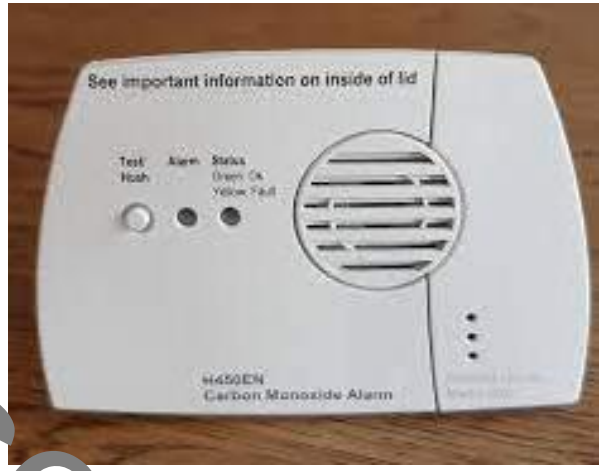
- Do the windows open and close easily
- Are there suitable window locks and fasteners

Smoke and Heat alarms, and Carbon Monoxide detectors

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What to check

- Is there a smoke alarm on every floor
- Have the dust covers been removed
- Is there a carbon monoxide detector near to the Gas boiler

Heating

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Radiators







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What to Check

- Turn the heating on - Are the radiators working ?
- Are there any visible leaks
- Are radiators securely fixed to the wall ?
- Does the room thermostat work? Turn it up or down and the boiler should turn on or off.

Kitchens

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Kitchens

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What to check

- Are the wall, base units and drawer fronts in an acceptable condition?
- Do all doors and drawers open and close correctly?
- Are all the worktops free from damage?









Plumbing

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Bathrooms

- Are there any chips or cracks in the sanitary fittings and bath panel?
- Does the toilet flush and refill properly?
- Do the taps work properly?
- Is the WHB, pedestal, WC cistern & pan fixed to the wall and floor?
- Does the privacy lock work.
- Do the extractor fans work and activate with the light switch?

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Splashback Tiling



Are any tiles cracked or chipped?



Is there any gaps in the grouting?

Mastic Sealant





Is it secure to the surface?



Any excessive black mould?

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Plumbing – What to check





Blockages



Dripping taps



Leaks to waste pipes



Leaks to supply pipes at joints



Frozen or seized stopcock

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Electrics

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Electrics



Sockets positioned near water!!!!!





Sockets and switches must be secure to wall with no gaps



Damage





Arcing or overload

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Walls, Ceilings and Decoration

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Walls, ceilings and decoration

Paintwork

- Has any paintwork been damaged or marked?
- Is there any signs of water damage?

Plaster

- Is there any cracks or damage to the plaster
- Have any nails or screws been left in the wall

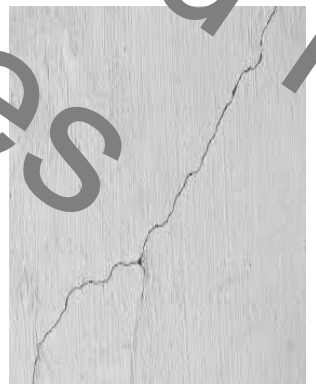
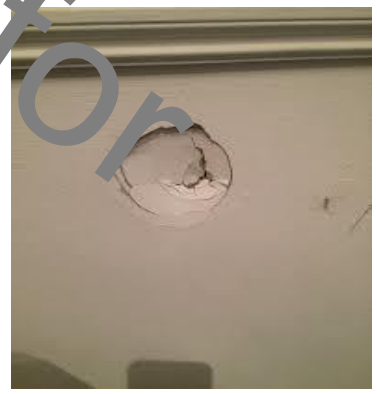
Decoration

- Is the decoration to an acceptable standard?

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Welfare Issues











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Dampness in the home

There are all sorts of reasons why a surface can appear damp

Understanding them will help you deal with it correctly the first time.

These are the **Big three**

- Penetrating damp
- Rising damp
- Condensation

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Penetrating Damp Symptoms

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Treatment for penetrating damp

- Roof defects such as faulty flashings
- Cracked or missing slates or tiles
- Faults in brickwork and masonry
- Blocked Gutters & Hoppers
- Missing or defective mastic sealant around windows and doors
- Blocked weep-holes or none installed
- Missing or defective trays in cavity walls

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Rising Damp



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Rising damp

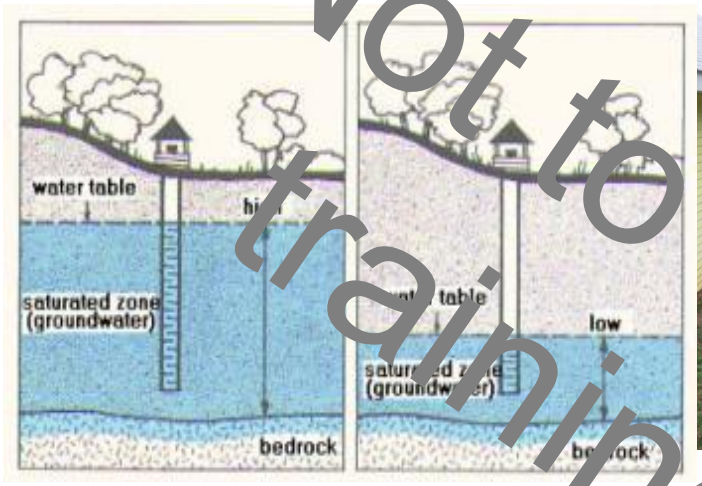






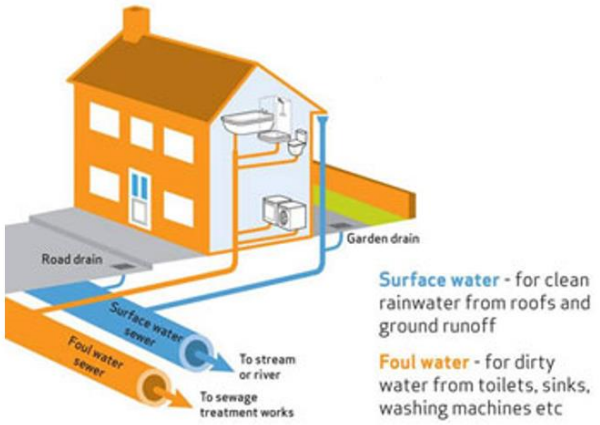
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Causes of Rising Damp









Surface water - for clean rainwater from roofs and ground runoff

Foul water - for dirty water from toilets, sinks, washing machines etc





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Rotting skirting boards



Black Mould



Peeling wallpaper





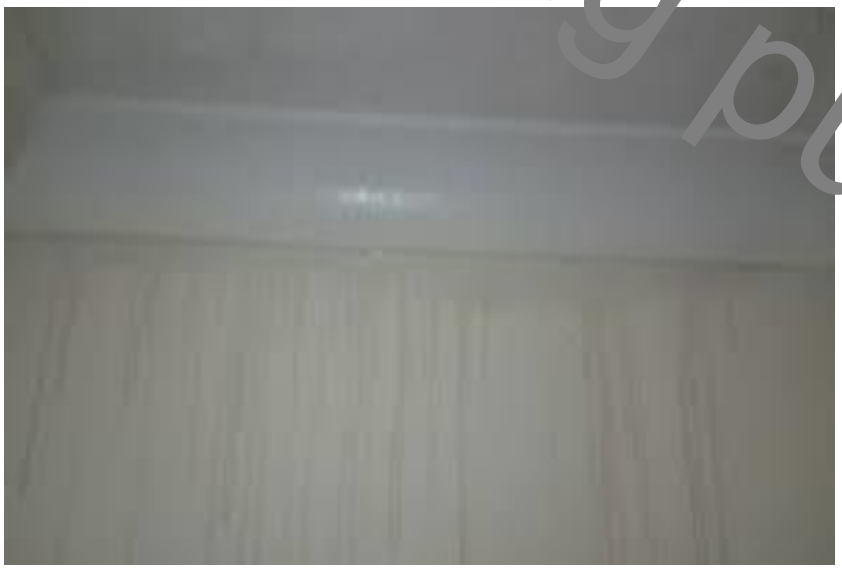
Flaky paint and plaster

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Condensation









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Causes of Condensation

- Warm air meeting cold surface
- Poor ventilation, especially in behind cupboards, in basements or confined spaces
- Cold surfaces: windows, walls (wet), cold bridging, cold water pipes not lagged
- Too many people in one room, or one person in the room for a long time (e.g. multi-occupancy)
- Low heating levels

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Symptoms of Black Mould













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Condensation

What is it?

- When warm air hits a cold surface it cools down and is forced to let go some of the moisture carried, making the cold surface wet

How does condensation damage my home?

- The damp caused by condensation causes mould to grow on walls, fabric and furniture. It can cause paint to blister and wallpaper to peel

Why is it worse these days?

- Better insulation and less draughts keeping heat from escaping.

How can I get rid of it?

- Make less moisture
- Keep the home warm
- Increase ventilation
- Allow air to circulate
- Remove mould as soon as it is found

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Hazards

What is a hazard?

HHSRS definition:

- Danger that can happen as a result of a deficiency and which could cause harm

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Gas Safety

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- There should be no signs of scorching around appliances
- Appliances should be securely fixed
- A gas safety check should be carried out when a property is vacated even if there is a current Gas Safety Certificate
- Any appliance other than Landlords should be removed



Electrical Safety

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Things to look out for:

- Consumer Unit – Bypassing mains supply
- Number of appropriately sited electrical socket outlets
- Electrical installations in close proximity to water including areas of damp
- Installation – wiring, extra sockets added, non standard light fittings



Fire safety

Things to look out for

- Safe siting for cookers, away from flammable materials
- Appropriately designed and installed fire doors and closers
- Smoke / heat detectors
- Means of escape, blocked routes
- Appropriately sited extinguishers and fire blankets
- Furnishings - Fire and smoke resistant materials



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Glazing







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Fungus and dry rot

- Wood decays and loses its strength
- Timber is attacked by secreting acids and enzymes
- Red spores





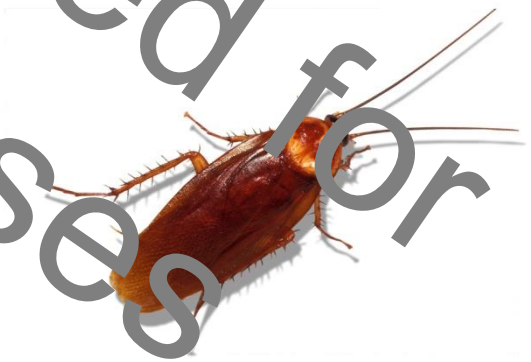
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Hygiene or Sanitation

Things to look out for

- Personal hygiene or living conditions
- Storage of waste
- Pests - mice, rats, cockroaches, fleas etc.
- Drain openings





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Trips and Falls

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Things to look out for

- Uneven paths and paving

- Stairs - treads, heights, nosing, handrails





Recording Information

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Recording Information – Best Practice

- It is good practice to keep records to show that inspections have been carried out, and any maintenance issues you have identified have been raised, especially around any Health and Safety issues
- Completed inspections should be stored centrally on a shared computer file
- These records demonstrate due diligence either as a result of a routine audit or following scrutiny after an incident or accident
- It is also good practice to record any actions you have taken - even where you are not required to do so

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Recording Information – useful hints & tips

Note taking

- Write clearly
- If you don't know the correct terminology then describe it accurately
- Try not to use too many abbreviations
- Number your pages. Helps you remember the sequence of your Inspection

Taking Photographs

- Inform the resident
- Avoid pictures with people in them – especially children
- If you're not sure of a component take a picture
- Let the resident view the pictures before you leave

Always spend a few minutes at the end of an Inspection to check that you have all the information before you leave

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Raising a Repair

Essential Details

When logging a defect you need to:

- Describe what the defect is
- It's precise location by room and position
- State what is required by the contractor to rectify it

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ESSENTIAL DO'S AND DON'TS

DO's

- Always be aware of your own safety
- Communicate and be respectful – this is someone's home
- Be polite and professional at all times
- Arrive on time
- Clearly identify yourself to the tenant - show your ID
- Explain the purpose of your inspection
- Don't speak in technical language
- Ensure that a responsible adult tenant is present
- Explain your findings and what will happen next
- Report H&S risks immediately

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ESSENTIAL DO'S AND DON'TS

DON'T

- Promise things you know cant happen – extra repairs
- Put yourself at risk
- Agree to stay in a property where only children are present
- Stay in the property alone, even if the resident leaves the keys
- Comment on the internal condition of the property
- Continue with the inspection if you feel threatened
- Continue with the inspection if the property is dangerous
- Walk into darkened rooms without using a torch

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Any Questions?

- Further questions
- Feedback forms
- Thank you for your time



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