

# Our settle home standard

At settle, we are committed to ensuring you can live safely and comfortably in your home.

Our settle home standard helps us achieve this. It sets out what you can expect from us when we look after and improve your home. If you are a settle homeowner, please see our separate document on homeownership.

There are three parts to our settle home standard:

- keeping you safe in your home
- improving your home, including how often we'll replace things like kitchens and windows
- future homes: our plans for the home of tomorrow

## A home that is decent

The main national housing and safety standard that we must comply with to ensure your home is safe and secure is the Decent Homes Standard. This is a government-set standard for all social housing landlords to meet. The Government defines a Decent Home as:

- One that meets safety standards for housing
- Being in a reasonable state of repair
- Having reasonably modern facilities (such as kitchens and bathrooms)
- Having sufficient thermal comfort

At settle, our home standard ensures that we not only meet this standard but go above and beyond these requirements, for example, by replacing your kitchen approximately every 20 years, which is ten years earlier than the Decent Homes Standard stipulates.

## Surveying your home

We will survey your home once every five years so we can check that we're meeting our settle home standard. During this survey, we will note the age and condition of many components of your home, including kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors and roofs.

We will also assess how energy-efficient your home is as we have committed to reaching the government target of an energy-efficiency rating of EPC 'C' on all our homes by 2030.

## Keeping you safe in your home

As a landlord, our first priority is to keep you safe in your home. Please tell us immediately about any issues that you think could be damaging to your health or any concerns you have about safety in your home.

We will carry out safety inspections in your home to make sure that it meets health and safety requirements. This may include checks for asbestos, fire safety or other issues that affect your wellbeing. We will notify you in advance of any inspection.

We will inspect and maintain the following equipment to meet legal requirements:

- Gas
- Electrics
- Water systems that need to be checked for legionella
- Fire alarms/emergency lights/other fire safety equipment
- Lightning conductors
- Door entry systems

### Gas Safety

- We will carry out a gas safety check on all your gas appliances every year to make sure they are safe. This is our legal obligation. If we find your appliance to be faulty, we will let you know, and you may need to replace it.
- We will send you an appointment for your gas service. If you are unable to make this appointment you can change it for a more suitable time.
- We will provide you with your gas safety certificate once the check is complete, this is called a Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR).
- Whilst carrying out your gas check, our contractor will check that you have a carbon monoxide alarm, if you don't, they will provide one for you.
- Our contractor will also check that smoke alarms are present and working in your home. If you don't have any smoke alarms or don't have at least one on each floor, we will provide new ones for you. This is our legal obligation.
- All our gas engineers are Gas-Safe certified.

### Electrical Safety

- Electrical installations in the home deteriorate with age and use and therefore we need to inspect and test your home at regular intervals.
- We will carry out what is called a 'Periodic Inspection and Test' at your home every five years.
- As part of this inspection our contractors will test the circuits, check electrical sockets and then provide you with a test certificate. The certificate will identify any issues that either require immediate rectification or less urgent issues that we will need to remedy in the future.
- We will check that you have working smoke detectors on each floor of your home and test them. If you don't have them, we will install them. Additionally, we will check if you require a carbon monoxide detector and provide one if you don't have one.
- Our contractors who visit your home will be registered and certified with the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC).

### Fire Safety

We are committed to reducing the risk of fire in your home by:

- Undertaking regular Fire Risk Assessments to our blocks of flats and sheltered accommodation.
- Ensuring suitable fire detection systems are fitted in communal areas of blocks of flats and inside each home.
- Carrying out regular communal area inspections to remove any items that could be a fire hazard or block an escape.
- Making sure escape routes are free from trip hazards, are adequately lit, are signposted and lead everyone to a place of safety.

- Carrying out checks to gas, electrical and fire safety systems within your home.

### Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- It is our legal obligation to ensure that all our homes have at least one working smoke detector on each habitable floor.
- If you have either a gas boiler or another form of fuel burning appliance, such as an oil boiler or an open fire then we will need to ensure that you have a working carbon monoxide detector too.
- We will check that you have these present in your home. Our electrical and gas contractors along with our repairs colleagues will be checking and providing and installing a detector should you require one.

### Asbestos Safety

Although by 1999 the use of all types of asbestos was banned, it was used extensively in construction during the 1970s. Much of this is still in place, but as long as it is in good condition and is not going to be disturbed, there is no risk to you or your family.

- Depending on the age of your home, we may carry out a survey to find out whether asbestos is present. If we identify any asbestos, we will record the type and condition. We will survey communal areas every year to monitor the condition of the asbestos material and the risk, if any, that it poses. This is called a management survey.
- We maintain an asbestos register for our homes and blocks which we regularly update and use to minimise risk.
- Before we make any major improvements to your home, we will survey the property to assess the risk of asbestos being present. If the works are likely to disturb the asbestos, then we will remove this where we can. If it is not practicable to remove it, we will seal it to ensure safety. This means that we record its presence and it is sealed into the building as this is a safer approach than removal and disrupting the material.
- All of our contractors and colleagues who enter your home will receive regular asbestos awareness training and, where required, we will only use licensed asbestos removal contractors in accordance with Health and Safety legislation.

### Water Safety (preventing legionella)

Legionella bacteria is commonly found in water. The bacteria multiply where temperatures are between 20-45 degrees C. The bacteria are dormant below 20C and do not survive above 60C. Legally we need to manage the risk of legionella. We follow a number of measures to do this:

- We carry out Water Risk Assessments, generally in our blocks with shared, stored water. These are where homes have a greater risk of legionella than others. The risk is usually linked to where water is stored. We monitor these homes and their communal water systems to ensure that the bacteria does not become a problem.
- Our assessments outline measures that we need to take to ensure legionella safety. These will include regular temperature checks of water outlets, regular checks of stored water tanks and regular chlorination (cleaning) of shower heads that run off stored water tanks, amongst others.
- We will always let you know if we need to access your home to carry out any check or cleaning of the water systems.

## Improving your home

### Kitchens

#### *We will:*

- Replace your kitchen every 20 to 25 years, which exceeds the Decent Homes Standard and will be determined by the condition surveys.
- During replacement we will ensure that you have sufficient cupboard space for the size of your kitchen.
- Provide a new sink and taps.
- Tile a splashback area above your worktops.
- Install new flooring and decoration.
- Install a new energy efficient light fitting and an efficient extractor fan where possible.
- Ensure the electrics are upgraded and provide electrical sockets.
- Keep you informed of the programme of works, when and who will be attending your property and for how long.

#### *We will also:*

- Offer you a choice of colours for your kitchen cupboards, worktops, tiling, decorations and flooring.
- Where necessary help you to clear out your existing units ready for the new kitchen.
- Offer to carry out additional works, such as extra tiling, integrating appliances or fitting your own light fitting at your own cost and subject to agreement with the contractor.

### Bathrooms

#### *We will:*

- Replace your bathroom every 30 years, as determined by the condition surveys.
- During the installation we will ensure that the layout of your bathroom meets your needs
- Install a new bath, sink and toilet.
- Redecorate and provide tiled splashbacks to your sink and a tiled area around your bath
- Provide a new non-slip floor in your bathroom.
- Provide a new energy efficient light fitting and we will ensure that the electrics are safe and tested
- Provide a new, efficient extractor fan where possible.
- Keep you informed of the programme of works, when and who will be attending your property and for how long.

#### *We will also:*

- Offer you a choice of colours for your tiling, decorations and flooring.
- Offer to carry out additional works, such as extra tiling, fitting your own light fitting or a shaver point at your own cost and subject to agreement with the contractor.

### Roof

- We will ensure that your roof is watertight and repaired when necessary.

- We will replace your roof when it has reached the end of its lifecycle or it is no longer value for money to keep repairing it.

#### *When we renew your roof, we will:*

- Replace pitched and flat roofs with materials of a similar type.
- Replace gutters, fascia, soffits and verges with an equivalent, usually made from PVCu, subject to relevant planning and conversion requirements.
- Make sure your TV aerial, satellite dish, alarm and telephone services etc. continue to work while we undertake the work and ensure they are re-fixed once work is complete.

#### *Loft and cavity insulation*

- We will install up to 300mm of loft insulation in your roof space where it is possible.
- If your home is constructed with cavity walls, we will install cavity wall insulation.
- If you live in a solid walled property, we will look at alternative forms of wall insulation; this will very much be governed by planning and conservation requirements.

### **Windows and doors**

- We will consider replacing your windows and doors based on their condition and age after 30 years for both.

#### *When we renew your windows or doors, we will:*

- Ensure all new windows and doors comply with Secured by Design standards and fire regulations. Where possible we will install fire escape windows to the upstairs of your home.
- Ensure new windows are internally glazed to provide greater security and improve maintenance.
- Ensure all new window handles are lockable.
- Use energy efficient glazing.
- Ensure all windows above ground floor, and elsewhere when necessary, have safety restrictors, allowing them to be opened to a maximum of 100mm unless overridden by an adult.
- Give you a choice, where possible, of front door design and colour, which will include a number, letter box, spy hole, draught proofing, door knocker and double-glazed vision panel where selected.
- Replace patio doors where they already exist.

### **Energy efficiency and comfort**

When we survey your home, we will assess how energy efficient it is and make improvements wherever we can, including:

- Replacing boilers.
- Sealing areas where draughts are coming in.
- Installing the most energy efficient windows for your property.
- Adding loft and cavity wall insulation.
- Insulating external walls where this is feasible.

## Heating and hot water

We know energy is a big percentage of household bills and we want all our homes to have energy-efficient heating wherever possible.

When required we will replace gas, coal or oil heating systems with an A-rated energy-efficient condensing boiler. We will replace heating systems every 15-20 years and replace your radiators every 30 years.

Where we cannot use gas central heating, we will ensure that the most energy-efficient heating system is used. This could be High Heat Retention (HHR) storage heaters, Air or Ground Source Heat Pumps. We are constantly looking to the market for new advances in alternative forms of heating systems to ensure the very best possible energy-efficiency for your home.

## Future homes: our plans for tomorrow

### Sustainability

We are committed to achieving Net Zero Carbon (the government ambitions for UK carbon emission reduction by 2050) and maximising energy efficiency for customers. Going forward, we plan to:

- Prioritise the decarbonisation of homes via the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), and other available funding streams.
- Where feasible, facilitate tenant improvement requests where they want to install EV charging points.
- Build to Part L standards – which supports the conservation of fuel and power – for our new build homes.
- Carry out ongoing consultation and engagement regarding sustainability with customers.

### Technological innovation

We will keep abreast of technological innovation to improve customer satisfaction and our ambition to achieve Net Zero Carbon. For example:

- From 2023, settle will start utilising smart technology in our homes. This will include smart sensors to monitor temperature, humidity and drafts in the home. This helps to control the environment within your home to ensure you are living efficiently and reducing risks of damp and mould, low temperatures and over-heating.
- We plan to use technological innovation for sustainability pilot projects, e.g., with solar panels and batteries, air and ground source heat pumps.
- Enabling our customers to interact with us via a customer portal, holding information on their homes, investment plans and repairs appointments.
- We will contact you individually to discuss and arrange work to your home. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact 0330 343 0016.