

PROSPECT



WINTER HOME GUIDE

PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS



That's right, it's the most exciting time of year! Time for family, food, presents and... property maintenance. Oh yes.

...Okay, we know it's not the first thing that comes to mind at this time of year and it's far from the most exciting, but looking after your household over the winter is important. Not only will it ensure that you keep warm, safe and save money, it will also keep your landlord happy. A win-win situation!

To help, we present you with this handy guide to see you and your property through the winter months. It contains tips and tricks for general maintenance, as well as what to do when there is a problem. Christmas really has come early!

THE IMPORTANT STUFF

Our opening hours are **9am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday.**

Christmas Closure: All of our offices will be closed from 4pm on 23rd December 2020 until 8.30am on 4th January 2021.

During these times your Property Manager will be happy to assist with any queries or issues.

Please report any maintenance issues on Fixflo:
<https://prospect.fixflo.com/>

If a problem arises outside of the above hours, check this guide to see if you can fix the problem yourself. If a contractor gets called out unnecessarily you may be charged for the call out fees.

If you can't fix the problem yourself and it is defined as an emergency, please contact the main Property Management line on 0118 955 9747 where you will be given the option to divert to our emergency line.

EMERGENCIES

An emergency is classed as something that causes a risk to tenants or the property, such as a leak that cannot be contained or an electrical fault other than a localised power cut. See below a brief guide as to what constitutes an emergency and requires immediate attention.

BEFORE CALLING:

- Contact your landlord if your home is not fully managed by a property management company.
- Check if you have British homecare insurance policy before calling our out of hours line.

WHAT COUNTS AS AN EMERGENCY?

- No heating or hot water **only counts as an emergency if a child under two or an elderly or vulnerable person lives in the household.**
- **Having no water whatsoever is an emergency** – but just having no hot water is not.
- **No power** – but check whether it is a power cut first before calling.
- **Leaks that cannot be contained.**
- If you cannot unblock a toilet and **it is the only one in the household.**
- **A broken handle or lock if it means you cannot secure or unlock the property.**
- **A broken window.**
- **If you have a gas leak or can smell gas, leave the home and phone the National Gas Emergencies number immediately on 0800 111 999.**

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A close-up photograph of a male technician wearing a blue cap and a white surgical mask. He is focused on working with a blue flexible pipe, using a pair of black pliers. He is wearing a white shirt and blue overalls with a tan tool belt containing various tools like a wrench and pliers. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a kitchen or utility area.

COVID-19 INFORMATION

Read the following information carefully for important details on how COVID-19 has impacted our services and organisation.

PRIORITY SERVICES

- Essential works are taking priority at the moment, with ovens, fridges, freezers and washing machines being prioritised over non-essential household items such as dish washers.
- Heating and hot water issues will be prioritised.
- EICR and electrical faults are prioritised over singular lighting issues.

SAFETY

Here at Prospect, we are doing everything we can to guarantee the safety of our tenants and staff. All of our employees and engineers will therefore be wearing full PPE for the entire duration of their time in your home. We only ask that you inform your Property Manager if you are self-isolating so that we can take measures to protect you and our contractors.

DELAYS

Unfortunately, our engineers are experiencing delays in material orders due to the pandemic, meaning that certain services may take longer than expected. We are also working through a backlog of services that had been put on hold during lockdown, which may lead to further delays. We apologise for the inconvenience and thank you for your patience during these unprecedented times.

HEATING

Oh no, there's snow heating! Let's make sure it's warm and toasty inside by ensuring your heating is running smoothly.

TENANT TIPS & TRICKS:

- **Check the boiler pilot light is on.** This is the small flame that lights the gas. If it is not on, refer to the boiler manual and if that fails, contact your Property Manager.
- **Check the boiler for an error code.** A quick look online should help you find the right make and model of the boiler and give you easy instructions to get it up and running again.
- **Test your radiators** to make sure they work correctly. If you notice they aren't heating properly, there are cold spots or they gurgle, bleed the radiators to let out trapped air.
- If you're going away at all, **leave your heating on a low temperature** and leave the loft hatch open, if you have one. Doing this will keep your property warm, avoiding mould and freezing pipes. (If you're going away for an extended period, please let your Property Manager know in advance.)
- **Don't set the thermostat too high.** This might seem counter-intuitive but the warmer your home is, the faster the heat will be lost to the outside. To achieve optimal comfort, it is recommended for homeowners to set their thermostats between 20 to 22 degrees Celsius.
- **Remember that boiler pressure and bleeding radiators are the tenant's responsibility,** so check the instruction manual or search the make and model of the boiler online to rectify the issue.

WATER AND PLUMBING

No one's dreaming of a wet Christmas. If you are having plumbing problems, **DON'T PANIC**. Simply follow our steps below to make sure your water and plumbing is running smoothly.

TENANT TIPS & TRICKS:

- **Make sure pipes are insulated**, especially pipes in the loft or outside the premises. If you notice any weak areas this can be raised with your Property Manager.
- **Make sure you know where the stopcock is and check that it works.** This will be essential to preventing further leakages if any pipes burst.
- **Make sure that pipes are clear** by periodically putting household drain cleaner down plugholes. And never let fat and food to go down kitchen pipes – especially after your festive feasts!

MOULD

At Christmas, you want mulled wine not mouldy walls! To prevent the growth of mould in your home follow the tips and advice below.

TENANT TIPS & TRICKS:

- Cover pans and turn down the heat when boiling food. If you have an extractor fan, please use it.
- Dry clothes outside or in a well-ventilated room or open a window to let the moisture out. Avoid putting wet clothes directly on radiators.
- When taking a shower or bath, ventilate the bathroom by opening the window or turning on the extractor fan if there is one.
- Open windows or trickle vents to change the air.
- Let air circulate by leaving a gap between furniture and walls.
- Wipe away moisture to stop mould developing. If you find mould, wipe it away with diluted bleach.
- You can also purchase a dehumidifier or moisture traps to place throughout the property.

EXTERIOR

The exterior of your property gets the full brunt of the winter weather. It protects you from the wind, rain and maybe even snow. So, although sometimes forgotten amongst heating and plumbing maintenance, it is crucial to maintain it!

TENANT TIPS & TRICKS:

- **Check for peeling paint**, which can be a sign of moisture penetrating the property.
- **Check pipes, drains and guttering for blockages and to make sure they're properly fixed.** If not, you can clear blockages yourself, or get a professional to look into both this and fixtures.
- **Make sure vents aren't obstructed.**

GARDEN

Get your garden, with all its furniture and fittings, ready for next summer's sunny gatherings by minimizing damage now. And who knows? Maybe it will get a blanket of snow this winter.

TENANT TIPS & TRICKS:

- **Rake up any fallen leaves before it's too late.**
- **Put away or cover up equipment and furniture** (including that trusty BBQ).
- **Check fences and gates are stable and secure.** If not, flag this with your Property Manager/landlord.
- **Clean and clear pathways and decking** as in wet and cold conditions this may become a slip hazard, especially if the weather gets icy.

TROUBLESHOOTING

We have compiled a list of what to do for various problems that may arise, and when you should treat them as urgent. We hope this will guide you on when to call the emergency line out of hours.

If the problem isn't urgent then please don't call our emergency line as you may be charged for call out fees.

Please be aware that you should still report any other non-urgent issues to your Property Manager as per the requirements of your tenancy agreement.

BOILER

Most issues with your boiler will require an engineer to attend and repair. However, there are a few checks you can do before reporting the issue that may resolve the problem without having to call out an engineer.

- Unless there is an obvious leak, we always recommend resetting the boiler.
- If you have no hot water, the water pressure could be to blame. If you have a hydraulic pressure gauge, you'll see low and high pressure indicated by red sections on the dial. On most digital gauges, you'll see a flashing pressure reading if there's a low-pressure warning. In such instances, check your boiler manual for instructions on re-pressuring (this means allowing more water to enter the system from the water mains supply.)
- If you have no heating or hot water and your boiler is making a gurgling noise or shows an ignition fault code, it could be that your waste pipe (or condensate pipe) has frozen. You can try pouring hot water over your pipe externally to thaw the ice. Try to concentrate on any pipework that is horizontal, such as bends. If it works you should hear the ice begin to crack and it can sometimes shoot out of the bottom of the pipe like an ice-pop. This can sometimes take several attempts, and if it doesn't work you may need to contact your Property Manager. Remember to only attend to pipes that are easily accessible and not to use boiling water, as this can be a safety hazard.

Having no hot water isn't an emergency, but having no water whatsoever is. If there is no known fault with your water supplier and the office isn't open to contact your Property Manager, please call 0118 955 9747 where you will be given the option to divert to our emergency line.

ELECTRICS

Having no power does count as an emergency – but do check first whether it is a) your fuse board, or b) a power cut. If it is neither, then please call your Property Manager or, if out of office hours, contact **0118 955 9747** where you will be given the option to divert to our emergency line.

TROUBLESHOOTING

GAS

- For gas issues, if your landlord has British Gas cover you should call **0333 2029798**.
- **If it is an emergency (i.e. you think you have a gas leak or can smell gas)**, leave the house and phone the National Gas Emergencies number immediately on **0800 111 999**. If you're at home, and you can do it safely, turn off your gas supply. The gas mains tap should be beside your gas meter.

PLUMBING

- **Leaks that cannot be contained are an emergency.** Turn off your water supply and be extra careful if the leak is near electricals.
- **If you can't unblock a toilet, it isn't an emergency unless there are no other toilets to use in the property.**

If you experience one of the above plumbing emergencies, call your Property Manager or, if out of office hours, contact **0118 955 9747** where you will be given the option to divert to our emergency line.

LOCKS, DOORS AND WINDOWS

- **Broken handles and locks are only considered an emergency if you are unable to secure or enter the property.**
- **Broken windows are an emergency.**

If a broken lock, handle, door, or window is the result of a break in, **always call the police first**. If not, please call your Property Manager or, if out of office hours, contact **0118 955 9747** where you will be given the option to divert to our emergency line.

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