

A photograph of a hallway with a wooden table, vases, and an arched doorway leading outside. The hallway has light-colored walls and a patterned carpet. On the left, a rustic wooden table holds several vases and a bowl. A large arched doorway at the end of the hallway is open, showing a glimpse of the outdoors. The overall atmosphere is bright and airy.

Your Tenants Handbook

A useful guide for living in a
Watsons managed property


WATSONS
LETTING SINCE 1961

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Welcome

Dear resident, welcome to your new home!

We'd like to introduce ourselves, Watsons, as the company responsible for managing your property. You can find out more information about our company by visiting our website:
www.watsonslb.co.uk

We welcome feedback from our Tenants.

Your feedback provides us with an opportunity to understand what you like or dislike about our service and improve our services where appropriate.

Watsons



Tenant handbook

This handbook contains information about being a Watsons Tenant. You should read it alongside your Tenancy Agreement but you should note that if there is any contradiction between anything stated in this handbook and anything stated in your Tenancy Agreement, the terms of the Tenancy Agreement take precedence.

This handbook includes advice on:

- Moving in.
- Your Tenancy Agreement.
- Your rights and responsibilities.
- Looking after your home, including repairs.
- Moving out.
- Useful contact information.

Also included in this handbook are some useful 'green tips' which provide some great ideas that will not only help the environment but also help save you money. We are committed to doing what we can to help the environment and we hope you will too.

We have designed this handbook for easy reference and it should answer many of your everyday questions.

Our Tenants' charter

We are committed to acting professionally and practically when communicating with our Tenants. We will provide the appropriate level of training and support for our staff to ensure that they have the skills to enable them to act in a proficient and helpful manner.

- We are committed to supporting equality and diversity and respect the needs of all our Tenants. We will not discriminate against any person on the grounds of race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status or age.
- Our maintenance and repair contractors will be vetted and meet Health and Safety requirements and will be committed to providing a responsive and courteous service to all our Tenants.

- We will enable our Tenants to make payments via Standing Order.
- You can contact our accounts department who are able to provide advice if you have difficulty in paying your rent.
- We welcome feedback from our Tenants and take complaints very seriously; your feedback provides us with an opportunity to understand what you like or dislike about our service and improve our services where appropriate.

Contacting us

Accounts and general enquiries: 01525 378309 opt 1

Maintenance: 01525 378309 opt 2

To report any general maintenance issues please report them via email to: maintenance@watsonslb.co.uk and for emergencies please call number above. (see P.17 for out of hours emergencies).

General enquiries email: info@watsonslb.co.uk

Moving in

Check in/inventory

Before you move into a property an inventory will normally be carried out, which is paid for by your Landlord. This is carried out by an inventory clerk who is a trained professional and experienced at carrying out inventories of rental properties. The purpose of the inventory is to:

- Detail the condition and contents of the property at the start of your Tenancy.
- Give us a record to help determine if any charges are required against your deposit at the end of your Tenancy.



The check in will be conducted by Watsons who will meet you at the property at a pre arranged time.

If you are not available or choose not to attend the check in, a copy of the report will be sent to you. You then have 7 days to notify the Inventory company of any comments.

Please read the inventory carefully, it will be assumed that you are in agreement with the inventory clerk's report unless you advise us otherwise within the 7 day period.

Keys

- We will provide you with keys for each person named on the Tenancy Agreement.
- Watsons will keep master keys for management, emergencies or gaining access to the property.

Lost keys/fobs and lock changes

- If you lose or damage any keys you must pay for their replacement. This could include the master set of keys, Landlord set and the lock change.
- Your Tenancy Agreement does not allow you to change the lock(s) without the Landlords prior permission.



Moving in checklist

Before moving in please check you have organised the following where they are required:

- Council Tax registration.
- Utilities: Gas, Water, Electricity.
- Telephone (if required).
- TV Licence.
- Contents Insurance (please note you must insure your own contents).

Your Tenancy deposit

At the start of the Tenancy you will be required to pay a security deposit of 5 weeks rent which will be held against any damage that is not considered 'fair wear and tear'.

The deposit will need to be cleared in Watsons bank account before your Tenancy starts.

The deposit cannot be used for the payment of rent.

Please refer to your Tenancy Agreement for full details.

Tenancy deposit protection

By law for an Assured Periodic Tenancy we have to ensure your Tenancy deposit is held in an approved Tenancy Deposit Scheme. This was introduced by the UK Government to ensure that deposits paid by Tenants are protected and that any disputes about their return are dealt with quickly, inexpensively and impartially.

There are three Government approved schemes and Watsons is a member of the Deposit Protection Service. More information on the DPS can be found at www.depositprotection.com.

Once your Tenancy deposit has been received and protected in an approved scheme you will receive a certificate of registration within 30 days.

How does the Tenancy deposit protection scheme work?

- Watsons transfer the deposit to the DPS.
- At the end of your Tenancy, Watsons will write to you detailing any deductions to be taken from your security deposit based on the 'Check Out' report.
- If you agree, we will instruct the DPS to return your deposit or the agreed balance within 5 working days of receiving written confirmation from you.
- If you disagree, you will need to advise us in writing of why you disagree, Watsons will then try and resolve the dispute with you.
- If any deductions cannot be agreed upon, you or Watsons can submit details to the relevant scheme after the end of the Tenancy so they can decide on a fair settlement.
- Where there is a registered dispute the DPS will return the undisputed amount to you and hold onto the disputed amount until a decision is made.
- The disputed amount will be paid in accordance with the instruction of an Independent Adjudicator.



Living in your home

Your Tenancy

Your Tenancy Agreement is a legal document and is a binding contract between you and your Landlord. Therefore when you sign your Tenancy Agreement you are bound by the agreement to keep to your responsibilities. It is important you read your Tenancy Agreement carefully and understand what it says.

Type of Tenancy

In most cases the Tenancy created will be an Assured Periodic Tenancy in accordance with the Housing Act 1988. This applies to all tenancies where:

- The rent is less than £100,000 per year.
- The property will be your main or principal home.



The Tenancy term

Properties are let on Assured Periodic Tenancies.

Once the Tenancy has started you have 'security of tenure' which means you have a right to remain in the property for a minimum period of 12 months, provided you do not break any of the terms of the Tenancy Agreement.

Your responsibilities

As a Tenant you have responsibilities to us and to your neighbours. It is important that you understand what you've agreed to do and keep to the rules set out in your Tenancy Agreement.

What we can expect from each other

Service	What can you expect from Watsons	What we can expect from you
Rent	<p>To offer help and advice if you get into financial difficulties</p> <p>To take appropriate action to recover any outstanding rent</p> <p>To provide standing order details for payment or other payment methods if this is not possible</p>	<p>To make your rent payments in advance on the agreed date and by the agreed method</p> <p>To advise us immediately if you are likely to get into difficulty paying your rent</p>
Gas servicing (where applicable)	<p>To write to you annually, informing you when a gas safety check needs to be carried out</p> <p>To carry out annual gas safety checks</p> <p>Provide you with a copy of the gas safety certificate</p>	<p>To respond to our calls and emails arranging access to your home to carry out an annual gas safety check</p> <p>To allow us into your home to carry out a gas safety check</p>
Repairs and maintenance	<p>To carry out repairs within Watsons set timescales</p> <p>To charge you for any damage you may have caused or any repairs that are your responsibility</p>	<p>To carry out minor repair jobs yourself eg. change lightbulbs etc</p> <p>Report all defects and problems which are the Landlord's responsibility straight away</p> <p>To obtain our permission, in writing, if you wish to decorate any part of the property</p>
Your home	<p>To conduct visits during the Tenancy</p>	<p>To use the property as your main home</p> <p>To keep your home in a clean and tidy condition</p> <p>To inform us, in writing, if the property will be completely unoccupied for more than 14 days at any one time</p>
Insurance	<p>To ensure the Landlord insures the building and the contents</p>	<p>To insure your belongings</p>
Moving out	<p>To repay you your security deposit, except where Watsons needs to deduct for any damage against your security deposit that is not 'fair wear and tear'</p>	<p>Leave the property when your Tenancy comes to an end</p> <p>To make sure the property is cleaned to a good standard before you leave and is returned in the same condition stated in your inventory</p>

Who is responsible for paying?

Some of the main costs associated with living in your home are shown below. If any are not shown in the table and you are in any doubt who is responsible for certain items, please contact Watsons to check on 01525 378309.

Item	Tenants	Landlord
Inventory check in		✓
Rent	✓	
Service charge		✓
Council tax	✓	
Gas	✓	
Water	✓	
Electricity	✓	
Telephone	✓	
Television Licence	✓	
Broadband, cable or satellite installation (please be aware any external installations require permission from your Landlord)	✓	
Buildings insurance		✓
Landlords contents insurance		✓
Tenants contents insurance	✓	
Private garden maintenance	✓	
Window cleaning – internally	✓	
Window cleaning – externally (dependant on your property type)	✓	✓
Routine repairs and maintenance		✓
Gas servicing (where applicable)		✓
Check out		✓
EPC		✓

Your rent

How the rent is calculated

Except where your Tenancy Agreement states differently, your rent is calculated on a calendar month basis.

When rent should be paid

Except where your Tenancy Agreement states differently, your rent is normally due monthly from the start date of your Tenancy.

The first rent payment is due on or before the commencement date of the Tenancy in the form of cleared funds.

If Watsons cannot confirm that the money has cleared we will not be able to allow you to move into the property.

How the rent is paid

Again, except where your Tenancy Agreement states differently, rent payments are made by calendar monthly instalments payable in advance by Standing Order to Watsons on the same date each month starting from the Tenancy Agreement start date. This needs to be from someone named on the Tenancy Agreement unless we have agreed otherwise with you in advance.

If you face difficulty paying the rent

Your home is at risk if you do not pay the full rent on time. If you experience problems and think you are going to have difficulty paying your rent:

- Contact our Lettings Accounts department to discuss the problem immediately on 01525 378309 or email accounts at accounts@watsonslb.co.uk.
- Don't ignore reminders.

According to UK law, we have the right to apply for possession of your home when you are two months in arrears. If this happens you will receive a notice advising you that we are about to begin legal proceedings.

By contacting us early we will have the best chance of helping you or advising you of an organisation that may be able to help you. It is really important not to fall into arrears because:

- You may lose your home.
- A Court can order you to pay costs and interest in addition to the unpaid rent.
- A Court judgement can affect your credit rating and make it harder to rent another property in the future.

Your responsibilities

Looking after your home

- Keeping your home clean and tidy.
- Letting us know if your home will be unoccupied for 14 days or more at any one time.
- Doing those minor jobs which a householder would be expected to do.

These might include:

- Replacing light bulbs or batteries.
- Bleeding radiators.
- Unblocking sinks or toilets.
- Replacing broken glass if caused by Tenant damage.



Reporting repairs

- Reporting all maintenance problems as soon as possible to maintenance@watsonslb.co.uk.
- Checking whether or not a repair is an emergency.

Decorating

- Taking reasonable care of the property.
- Making sure you have permission in writing from your Landlord before decorating any part of the property.



Flooring

- Ensuring carpets and floor coverings are protected from all stains and burns. Any damage may require complete replacement for which you will be charged.

Fridge/freezer (where provided)

- Defrosting regularly but never using a knife or other sharp object as this may damage the elements.

Garden (where relevant)

- Keeping your garden in good seasonal and tidy order. This must include borders and hedge trimming.



Rubbish/Recycling

- Ensuring you dispose of rubbish and recycling responsibly and not allowing it to accumulate as this will help prevent vermin problems.
- Finding out what day rubbish and recycling is collected in your area and putting out your wheelie-bin on time or using well sealed bin bags (where relevant).

Satellite dishes and aerials

- Not fitting an aerial or satellite dish to any part of the property without written permission in advance from your Landlord.
- Meeting the cost of fitting and removal, together with making good to a professional standard if a satellite dish or aerial has been fitted without authorisation.

Sinks and work surfaces

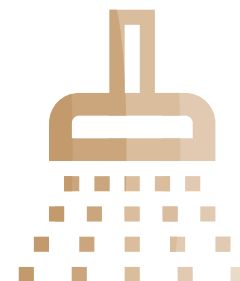
- Using the correct cleaning materials, chopping boards and heatproof mats to protect surfaces.
- Not putting fatty substances down drains as this may block them and you will be liable for the unblocking costs. Always try drain unblockers before requesting an engineer visit.

Shower head

- De-scaling regularly (where necessary and in hard water areas).

Security

- Ensuring windows and doors are locked when you leave the property unattended.



Tumble dryer (where supplied)

- Cleaning the filter regularly.

Ventilation

- Making sure windows are opened regularly, particularly in the bathroom and kitchen to avoid the formation of mould and mildew.
- Wiping down visible condensation.
- Report immediately if an extractor fan stops working.

Walls

- Not using Blu-Tac or other similar products as this leaves oily residue on the walls and can take off paint when removed.
- Only using purpose made picture hooks, or Command strips, not nails, screws or tacks. Always get permission in writing before putting anything on the walls.

Washing machine (where supplied)

- Cleaning the soap dispenser, rubber seal and filter regularly.



Gas safety

- If you suspect a gas leak contact the National Grid directly on 0800 111 999 and then call Watsons to inform us so the Landlord can be made aware.

Vermin and infestation

By ensuring your rubbish and recycling is disposed of correctly, you minimise the risk of vermin and infestation. In addition, ensuring garden supplies such as grass seed, bird feed etc, are stored in secure airtight containers will also help.

Legally the removal of vermin and infestations are not generally the responsibility of the Landlord, unless the local Council determines that there has been a breach of Health and Safety. As such, removal of vermin and infestations are usually the responsibility of the occupier.

What to do

Mice – If you experience mice in the property within the first two weeks of living there, your Landlord will be responsible for treatment to remove the infestation. After this, you become responsible and should contact your Local Council if you need help.

Wasps or bees – Contact your Local Council for help. Wasps and bees are not the Landlord's responsibility.

Rats – Contact your Local Council for help. They will help determine what is attracting the rats and provide advice on how to deal with them.

Landlord responsibilities



General repairs and maintenance

Under law, a Landlord has certain responsibilities regarding repairs and maintenance. These are:

- A duty to ensure the safety of a rented property so that no injury or damage is caused to the occupants, neighbours or the public.
- Routine maintenance of the appliances supplied by the Landlord within the property. However, the cost of repair or replacement resulting from any damage caused by negligence or improper use rather than general 'wear and tear' will be your responsibility.

- The structure and exterior of the building, ensuring any repairs are carried out. However maintenance and everyday care including, but not limited to: Clearing gutters, drains, managing plant growth e.g. climbers, or moss to avoid damage to the exterior, is the responsibility of the Tenant.
- Installations for the supply of water, gas, electricity and sanitation.
- Basins, sinks, baths and toilets (not including items damaged or broken through misuse or neglect) space and water heating installations.

Furniture and furnishings

- Where supplied, ensuring all upholstered furniture, beds, mattresses, pillows and cushions supplied by the Landlord and forming part of the letting must comply with the Furniture & Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 amended 1989, 1993 and 2010.



Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

- Fitting smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms (where applicable).

Gas safety

- Maintaining gas appliances and pipework in a good and safe condition and in good working order.
- Carrying out a gas safety check annually using a qualified engineer and providing you with a copy of this inspection certificate for your records.

Electrical equipment

- Making sure all electrical wiring in the property is safe by having a valid Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR).

How to report a repair

Please report repairs by email where possible, but in the case of urgent repairs please call the office:

email: maintenance@watsonslb.co.uk, tel: 01525 378309 opt 2

Please note; if a repair is a result of damage, misuse or negligence, or is not the Landlords responsibility, you will be charged at the time it is carried out or have the cost deducted from your deposit – please check when you call.

*See P.17 for out of hours.



Emergencies



What is an emergency?

If we find you have used an out of hours emergency contractor and the issue was not a genuine emergency or an urgent repair we will charge you for the work.

See below for what qualifies as an emergency or an urgent repair. We will also charge you for any repairs that we believe are needed as a result of damage caused by you.

What to do in an emergency

- If there is an emergency or urgent repair at night or over the weekend, please call an emergency contractor to resolve the initial problem only to ensure no further damage is caused to the property and it is safe for occupation. Please email our maintenance team to report the issue as soon as possible so we can deal with it on our return to the office.

This is only for genuine emergencies, so please be aware that you may be charged if the issue is not deemed to be an emergency.

- Certain emergencies such as a fire or a gas leak will require the public emergency services. Please use a common sense approach in these circumstances.
- In the event of a break-in, the Landlord is responsible for securing the exterior of the property. If, however, the break-in is shown to result from Tenant negligence, such as leaving keys visible, lost keys or not locking up properly, you may be charged for making good any damage to exterior security.

To avoid confusion please see below details of what constitutes an emergency:

Emergency	But remember to...
Leaks which cannot be stopped or will cause further damage if allowed to continue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turn off the water using the stopcock or meter. If you are unable to do this yourself please contact an engineer - Place a suitable receptacle under the leak to prevent further damage - Contact the occupants if the leak is coming from a property adjacent or above - Inform Watsons of the leak and the outcome of contact with any neighbouring property
Electrical failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Telephone the electricity supplier to check if the failure is because of an unpaid bill or general power cut to the area. - Check the fuse box to see if any fuses have tripped
Heating system breakdown at the beginning of a weekend or holiday period where there is risk of the system freezing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Call out an emergency engineer
Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact the emergency services immediately
Gas leak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact the National Grid Emergency Service on 0800 111 999
Structural collapse or risk of collapse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vacate the property and call an emergency contractor and emergency services if necessary
Security (break ins) – entrance/exit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact the emergency services immediately then call Erringtons Locksmiths on 07903 953953

An urgent repair is classified as the below. We will endeavour to visit and assess the repair within 24 hours and complete all works within three working days where possible.

- White goods or Landlord appliances.
- Blocked toilets or drains.
- No hot water.
- Heating not working.
- Water leak.

Your responsibilities

You must not cause undue noise or nuisance to your neighbours or in the general neighbourhood. This applies to you as the Tenant and anyone else living with you or visiting you.

Please treat others around you as you would wish to be treated.

For example:

- Do not leave rubbish or bins out on the wrong day, in shared areas or where it could cause problems for others.
- Tell your neighbours if you are having a party or barbeque, keep the noise to a reasonable level and ask visitors to be quiet when they leave.
- Control pets properly; do not leave dogs to bark during the day, or leave your pets where they can cause a nuisance.
- Smoking and/or vaping is prohibited in all Watsons managed properties.
- Bear in mind that your neighbours may have young children who go to bed early.
- Only use audio devices such as the radio and television, or play musical instruments during reasonable daytime hours and at reasonable levels.

Noise

Noise nuisance is taken very seriously and Watsons will not hesitate to take action against any Tenant who causes a nuisance.

If you have a complaint about nuisance or anti-social behaviour, in the first instance try to deal with the matter by discussing it in a polite and tactful way with the person causing the nuisance. It is possible that the person does not realise that they, or a member of their family, are causing you a problem.

If the above doesn't help, please contact Watsons for advice.

Parking



If you rent a property with an allocated car parking space you must only use that space. You must not store a commercial vehicle, boat or caravan in your allocated space or in any shared car park.

Pets

Pets and other animals cannot be kept at the property without prior written permission from your Landlord.

Moving Out

The end of your Tenancy Period

Your Tenancy will come to an end if you decide to serve notice.

If you wish to leave, each person listed on the Tenancy must advise us of this by letter or email to info@watsonslb.co.uk. When we receive this we will:

- Confirm the date of departure and send you an email detailing the vacating process.
- Carry out a checkout using the inventory usually within 48 hours of your departure. This will be carried out by a professional inventory clerk.
- Notify you of the cost of any damaged or missing items, cleaning or gardening for which you are liable.
- Arrange the return of the balance of your deposit under the terms set out in the 'moving in' section
How does the Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme work?
- You must report any repairs and maintenance issues before you leave and allow access for the work to take place.
- All keys must be returned on the last day of the Tenancy or no later than 9am the following day. If you do not do this you will be charged rent until they are returned and/or the cost of replacement keys or lock changes.



*Watsons is a trading name of Quarters Estate Agents, 17-21 Ropa Court, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 1DU

Moving out check list

We know how stressful moving can be so we have put together a handy checklist of things that need to be done before moving out to help ease the process.

One month before moving	Provide Watsons with notice in writing of your intention to leave (Please remember that this needs to be done by each person listed on the Tenancy)	
	Check out will be booked	
	Book a professional removal company if required	
	Book post redirection with Royal Mail	
	Inform all service providers of your change of address, including: Electricity Gas Water Internet Telephone Council Tax TV Licence DVLA Credit Cards	
	Cancel your standing order after the last rent payment has been made	
Three weeks before moving	If you plan to use a professional cleaner, remember to book your appointment prior to your move out date	
	Advise Watsons of any repairs you think might need doing	
	Provide Watsons with a forwarding address and telephone number	
Two weeks before moving	Cancel regular deliveries of newspapers, milk etc.	
One week before moving	Defrost and clean the fridge and freezer so it is ready for the move	
	Contact your removal company to confirm their arrival time and notify them of any last minute details	
	Ensure the property is left in good order and left to a good clean standard	
Moving out day	Write down your meter readings and ensure utility companies are informed	
	Ensure nothing is left behind	
	Check all windows are closed and doors locked	
	Return keys to Watsons	

Your feedback

We are committed to providing a good quality service to all our Tenants and are always looking for ways we can improve. Your feedback is an important part of this, so please get in touch if you have any concerns. If you are unhappy about any aspect of our service, please do talk this through with a member of our team. If this does not resolve the situation to your satisfaction and you wish to make a formal complaint, please rest assured this will be taken seriously and dealt with as per our complaints procedure.

If you wish to make a complaint please write to:

Watsons
17-21 Ropa Court
Leighton Buzzard
Bedfordshire
LU7 1DU

Or email info@watsonslb.co.uk for a copy of Watsons complaints procedure.

Green tips

Watsons would like to work with our Tenants to help make the world a better place for future generations.

This information pack contains a number of suggestions that could both save you money and collectively make a very positive impact on the planet. Please share these tips with friends and family because together we can make a difference.



Energy

Did You know?

- Turning the thermostat on your central heating system down by a few °C could cut your heating bills.
- Washing clothes at 30°C instead of 40°C uses around 40% less energy.
- One energy saving light bulb can save you up to £9 per year • that adds up to more than £100 over the course of the bulb's lifetime!
- By boiling the kettle with only as much water as you need, you could save enough energy in a week to run a TV for 26 hours.

- The average household could save money each year on energy bills and two tonnes of carbon dioxide by being more energy efficient.

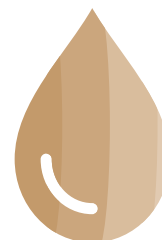
Energy saving tips

- Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows.
- Make sure your hot water cylinder thermostat is not set higher than 60°C/140°F.
- Turn off the lights when you leave a room.
- Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave appliances on charge unnecessarily.
- Dry washing on a clothes line outside whenever possible.
- Put the lid on a pan to reduce the amount of time and energy it takes to boil.
- Walk, cycle or take public transport wherever possible.
- Share car journeys where possible; or join a car club.

Water

Did You know?

- Simply turning the tap off whilst you clean your teeth could save as much as nine litres of water a minute.
- Don't overfill the kettle when making a cup of tea. Only fill and boil what you need.
- Taking a shower rather than a bath could save you up to 400 litres of water a week.
- Fix dripping taps — a dripping tap can waste 90 litres of water a week.



Water saving tips

- Don't let the cold water that comes through before a tap runs hot go down the drain – use it for watering plants or put it into a water butt in the garden.
- Keep a jug of water in the fridge to prevent wasting water every time you wait for the tap to run cold.
- Only use the washing machine and dishwasher when you have a full load.
- Consider buying a water butt to collect rain water for the garden using rain water not only saves mains water but also the energy used to treat it.

Waste

Did You know?

- On average, every person in the UK throws away their own body weight in rubbish every seven weeks.
- The energy saved from recycling one glass bottle will power a TV for 15 minutes or a computer for 20 minutes.
- 100,000 tonnes of plastic bags are thrown away in the UK every year - that is the weight of 70,000 cars. Carrier bags dumped in landfill take 100 years to decompose.
- If you recycle your paper, in just seven days it could come back as your newspaper.
- 50% of food purchased in the UK goes to waste.
- The UK produces enough waste every two hours to fill the Albert Hall.
- The UK produces more than 434 million tonnes of waste every year.
- Glass bottles can be recycled into house insulation. Plastic bottles can be recycled into fleece jackets.



Waste Saving tips

- Reduce, reuse, recycle.
- Register with the Mailing Preference Scheme to avoid receiving junk mail.
- Use shredded waste paper as a substitute for animal bedding or cat litter.
- Donate unwanted items to charity shops or give them away.
- Compost kitchen and garden waste.
- Recycle as much household waste as possible – contact your local council to find out about recycling facilities and services in your area.
- Choose to reuse – take shopping bags with you and if you can't avoid an occasional plastic bag then reuse it.
- Write a shopping list to help you only buy what you need to avoid throwing away excess food.

Condensation

This section explains what condensation is, how it can affect your health and the condition of your home, and what you can do to reduce it.

Condensation happens in all homes when warm moist air meets a cold surface and tiny water droplets develop. The more moisture in the air, the more water is produced.

Everyday activities, such as cooking, washing clothes and bathing create moisture in the air. There is always some moisture in the air and warm air holds more moisture than cold air. You notice it when you see your breath on a cold day, or when the mirror mists over when you have a bath or shower.

Condensation often happens because warm damp air from kitchens and bathrooms moves to cooler areas, such as bedrooms. It happens more in cold weather, even if it is raining or dry. Look for it in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards.

Signs of condensation

- Dampness occurring in winter rather than summer.
- Damp and black mould in the corners of rooms, behind furniture and in cupboards.
- Walls, ceilings and cold surfaces, such as cold water pipes, “sweat” with moisture.
- Water appears on the insides of the windows.
- Outside walls are affected rather than internal walls between rooms.
- Clothes in cupboards and drawers have a musty smell and mildew on them.

How condensation affects you

If left unchecked and untreated, condensation can become a serious problem. Too much condensation will make your home damp. House dust mites and mould growth both occur more often in damp conditions, and these are associated with allergic reactions.

Damp conditions can also cause damage to your home, such as causing windows to rust or rot, and plaster to perish, and in serious cases can damage electrics. Your soft furnishings and decorations can be spoilt by damp and mould growth.

Condensation is caused by moisture produced in the home, but it is not the only cause of damp. It can also come from building or plumbing leaks or rising damp.

Signs of dampness from leaks:

- It can happen any time of year.
- You can see a definite damp area, possibly with surface water visible.
- Little or no black mould appears on the damp area. If you suspect that dampness in your home is caused by a leak you should report it to us as soon as possible.

Looking after your home

- Remove mould growth by using a mould and mildew cleaning product (available from most supermarkets and DIY stores), Make sure you use a product which has a Health and Safety Executive approval number, and that you follow the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Wipe down the inside of windows if they become wet with condensation.
- Do not place beds and wardrobes against outside walls as mould is more likely to grow behind them.



- Ensure the property is properly ventilated ie: open windows, keep trickle vents on windows open and make use of extractor fans in kitchens/bathrooms.

Furniture

- Don't put too many things in wardrobes and cupboards as it stops the air circulating.
- Where possible allow a gap between furniture and walls to allow air circulation (particularly important with outside walls).



Decorating (with Landlord's permission)

- When you redecorate your bathroom or kitchen, use a paint designed to be used in these rooms).
- If you are decorating a room where mould is a problem do not use any wallpaper and instead use a good quality fungicidal paint.
- Treat and remove the mould before redecorating – there are various products on the market that will help, such as fungicidal products.

Reducing steam and moisture

- When cooking, cover pans with lids, and keep the kitchen door closed to stop wet air from circulating around your flat or house. Make sure a window is open or the extractor fan is on.
- If you use a tumble dryer make sure it is vented so that the air escapes to the outside.
- If you have to dry clothes indoors put them in a room and close the door, leaving the window wide open or fan on.
- When bathing, run cold water into the bath first, and then run the hot water. This creates less steam.
- When bathing or showering use the extractor fan where provided or open a window to allow the steam to dissipate.

Heating your home

- Heat all rooms even if they are not being used.
- Radiators with Thermostatic Radiator Valves (TRV's) will give you greater control over the heat from each individual radiator.
- If you have central heating, use the thermostat to set the temperature to a comfortable level (around 18°C to 21°C). Remember, turning the thermostat down by 1 or 2 degrees can save energy and save you money.
- Do not place furniture in front of radiators, as this will stop them from heating the room.
- Do not use the heating on a high setting for short periods of time. Heating your home for a longer time at a lower temperature will keep your home warmer and cost you less.
- Do not use portable LPG' (Calor Gas) heaters, These produce a lot of moisture and are not allowed in our rental properties for health and safety reasons.



Ventilating your home

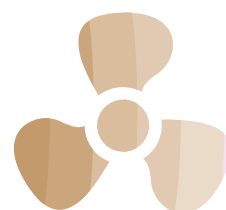
- It's important to allow plenty of fresh air into your home to stop the air indoors becoming stale and humid, which is not good for your health.
- Always keep a small window or an air vent/trickle vent open when you are at home, It's best to keep air vents open all the time.
- After you have had a bath or shower open the bathroom window until the steam has cleared; or use the extractor fan if you have one.
- When cooking, make sure the kitchen door is closed, the extractor fan is on if you have one, or a window is open.

Extractor fans

- Some of our homes are fitted with extractor fans. These can quickly remove damp air from kitchens and bathrooms, where most moisture is produced.
- Extractor fans should be used whenever you are cooking or bathing. After you've finished in the bathroom or the kitchen leave the fan on for about 20 minutes to make sure all the steam has cleared.
- When using an extractor fan keep the windows in the room closed. If a window is open the fan will draw air in from the outside, rather than drawing the damp air out from the room. Make sure your curtains or blinds don't cover the fan.
- Some fans switch on and off automatically according to the amount of moisture in the air. Do not turn these off at the power switch as they are designed to work when they are needed. If you suspect that they are coming on more or less often than they should, please report this to us. In most cases, if you follow the steps in this leaflet you will be able to keep condensation under control, and it will not be necessary for us to carry out repairs.

We will consider works if:

- You are a Tenant and have followed the advice in the this leaflet and still have very bad condensation and mould growth.
- If you have bad condensation and mould in a living room or bedroom contact us to arrange an inspection – we may need to carry out works, which could range from a professional mould clean, to insulating walls or fitting extractor fans.



We will not carry out works:

- On small areas of mould.
- In hallways, bathrooms, toilets or kitchens.
- If you have small patches of mould growth you will need to remove it yourself using cleaning products.

If you have any questions about condensation or responsibilities for repairs in your home, contact us for advice.



WATSONS

LETTING SINCE 1961

17-21 Ropa Court, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 1DU

01525 378309

info@watsonslb.co.uk

www.watsonslb.co.uk

Registered in England No. 07378979 Registered Office: 17-21 Ropa Court, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire LU7 1DU