

Home Safe Home Guide



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Useful information to
keep you safe in your home

Introduction

Every customer has the right to a safe, secure home and a good-quality service. You also have the right to be listened to and to have your views considered in decisions that affect your home, community and safety.

Keeping everyone safe is something we all share responsibility for. This booklet explains how we will help keep you, your household, and your neighbours safe - as well as our staff, visitors and contractors.

It also sets out what we will do, and what we need from you to make sure your home stays safe and healthy.



Responsibilities

Our responsibilities

We have a legal duty to make sure your home is safe and meets all health and safety requirements.

We do this by:

- Carrying out regular safety checks in your home
- Looking after communal areas and keeping them clean and safe
- Making sure our neighbourhoods are well maintained.

These checks are important and help protect you, your household and your neighbours.

We will always:

- Let you know when a safety check is due
- Arrange a suitable time to visit your home.

Your responsibilities

You can support us by:

- Reporting any safety concerns in your home
- Allowing access for essential safety checks (this is part of your tenancy agreement)
- Keeping appointments, or letting us know as soon as possible if you need to rearrange
- Co-operating with any work needed to keep your home safe
- Keeping your details up to date, especially anything that may affect how we respond in an emergency (for example, if you need help to evacuate).

If you ever have questions or concerns, please contact us - we're here to help.

Tips for your safety check appointment

To help your visit go smoothly:

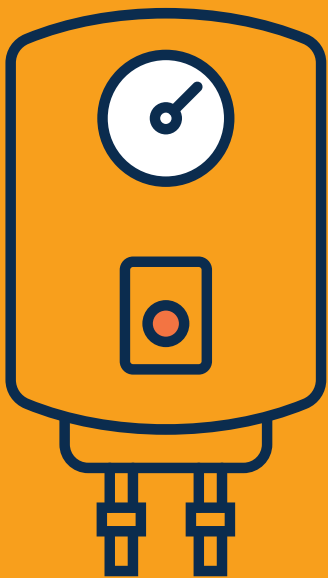
- Be ready at the agreed time
- Follow any instructions we've given you before the visit
- Get in touch if you have any questions or need support
- Always ask to see ID before letting anyone into your home
- Keep children and pets away from work areas
- If scaffolding is in place, follow any safety advice and signage.



Gas and heating safety

We carry out a safety check and service of your gas system every year.

This includes:	
Your boiler, pipework and any Cobalt-owned gas appliances	
Any solid fuel appliances (such as wood burners)	
Checking your smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms are working properly	



Why this matters

Gas safety checks are a legal requirement and help keep you safe.

Faulty appliances can cause serious risks. Gas leaks can lead to fires or explosions, and poorly maintained appliances can produce carbon monoxide - a gas you can't see, smell or taste - which can be fatal.

Regular checks help prevent problems and keep your home safe and efficient.

How often is a gas safety check

We carry out a gas safety check once a year. The visit is free and usually takes around 45 minutes. It's important we can access your home to carry this out, so if an appointment doesn't work for you, just let us know and we'll rearrange it where we can.

What happens during the visit

During your appointment, we will check all Cobalt-owned gas appliances, pipework and alarms, and carry out a visual check of your cooker. Your cooker is your responsibility, but if it's unsafe, we will let you know and may disconnect it for safety.

We will also:

- Show you how to turn off your gas in an emergency
- Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, (replacing them if needed)
- Provide a Gas Safety Record within 28 days.

What you need to do

To help us keep your home safe, we ask that you:

- Make sure your meters have credit for the visit
- Get in touch if you need to rearrange your appointment
- If any gas appliances you own are faulty, have them repaired by a Gas Safe registered engineer
- Check with us before installing any gas appliances
- Let us know if you have any concerns about gas safety.

If you're worried about heating costs or anything else, please contact us - we're here to support you.

Gas and heating safety



Staying safe at home

Test your carbon monoxide alarm regularly and contact us if it's not working - we'll replace it free of charge.

Don't:

- Use appliances you think are faulty
- Block vents, air bricks or flues
- Make changes to your home without permission.



If you smell gas or your carbon monoxide alarm sounds

Act quickly:

- Turn off the gas at the meter if it's safe
- Open doors and windows
- Put out any flames
- Leave the property
- Do not use electrical switches.

Call the National Gas Emergency Service on **0800 111 999** and call us on **0330 303 2222**.



Solid fuel appliances

Solid fuel appliances, like wood burners, can be safe if used correctly but carry higher risks. We can remove these free of charge and replace them with safer heating if you would like us to. Keep them safe by using the right fuel, keeping them clean and making sure alarms are working.

- Do not leave them unattended while lit
- Do not burn rubbish or block vents
- Do not overload or overheat the fire.



Heat pumps

Heat pumps are designed to run steadily and keep your home at a consistent temperature.

To get the best from your system:

- Leave it running rather than turning it on and off
- Keep vents and units clear
- Allow annual servicing
- Report any issues early.

Avoid blocking or covering the unit, and don

Fire safety

Smoke alarms

Smoke alarms are one of the simplest ways to stay safe. They give you early warning if there's a fire, giving you time to get out.

It's important to have a working alarm on every level of your home. If you do not have a smoke alarm on each floor, please contact us as soon as possible.

- Test your alarms regularly (just press the test button)
- Ask for help if you're unable to test them yourself
- Never ignore a sounding alarm - even if it's not yours.

If you hear an alarm and think there may be a fire, call **999**.

Smoking

If you or someone in your home smokes, a few simple steps can make a big difference:

- Avoid smoking in bed or when you're tired
- Use a sturdy ashtray that won't tip over
- Let ash cool before putting it in the bin
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children
- Avoid charging e-cigarettes overnight.

Heating appliances

Using heating safely helps reduce the risk of fire:

- **Keep heaters well away from furniture and curtains**
- **Use a fireguard with open fires**
- **Have chimneys cleaned regularly**
- **Do not dry clothes on or close to heaters.**

Kitchen safety

Most house fires start in the kitchen, often when cooking is left unattended:

- Stay in the kitchen while cooking, especially when using the hob
- Keep tea towels and loose clothing away from heat
- Avoid cooking if you're very tired or have been drinking
- Keep ovens and grills clean to prevent grease build-up
- Avoid using chip pans and never use water on an oil fire.



Fire safety

Electrical items

Electrical items are part of everyday life, but it's important to use them safely.

- Try not to overload sockets (one plug per socket is a good guide)
- Check cables for damage or burn marks
- Turn off items that don't need to be left on
- Avoid charging devices overnight where possible.

If something doesn't seem right, stop using it and get advice.

Candles

Candles can make your home feel cosy, but they do need care.

- Always use a proper holder on a heat-resistant surface
- Keep them away from curtains, furniture, hair and clothing
- Make sure children and pets can't knock them over.

It's safest to put candles out before leaving the room or going to sleep.

Before you go to bed

Having a simple night-time routine can help keep you safe.

- Close internal doors to help stop fire and smoke spreading
- Keep keys and a phone nearby in case you need to leave quickly
- Turn off electrical items where you can
- Keep escape routes clear.

If a fire blocks your escape, move into a room, close the door, block gaps with bedding if needed and call **999**.

Wheelie bins

Wheelie bins can be a fire risk, especially if they're close to your home.

- Try to keep bins away from doors and windows
- Store them somewhere secure, especially overnight.

Mobility scooters, e-bikes and e-scooters

These can be very useful, but they do need to be stored and charged safely.

If you live in a block or shared building, it's a good idea to speak to us before buying one so we can help you understand the safest options.

Storage

Avoid keeping or charging them in hallways, stairways or near exits, as this could block your escape in an emergency. If possible, store them in a separate room and keep escape routes clear.

Charging

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Use the correct charger
- Avoid charging overnight or while you're

Medical oxygen in the home

Oxygen therapy is commonly used to help with breathing and is safe when used correctly. However, because oxygen can make fires burn more easily, it's important to take a few extra precautions at home.

Using oxygen safely

When using oxygen, it's best to keep it well away from anything that could cause a fire.

Avoid using oxygen near:

- Cigarettes, lighters or matches
- Cooking or heating appliances
- Grease, oils or oil-based products

For your safety:

- Avoid smoking, and don't allow others to smoke nearby
- Turn off the equipment when it's not in use and keep the room ventilated
- Avoid using flammable products like aerosols, cleaning fluids or oil-based creams while using oxygen
- Make sure your smoke alarms are working

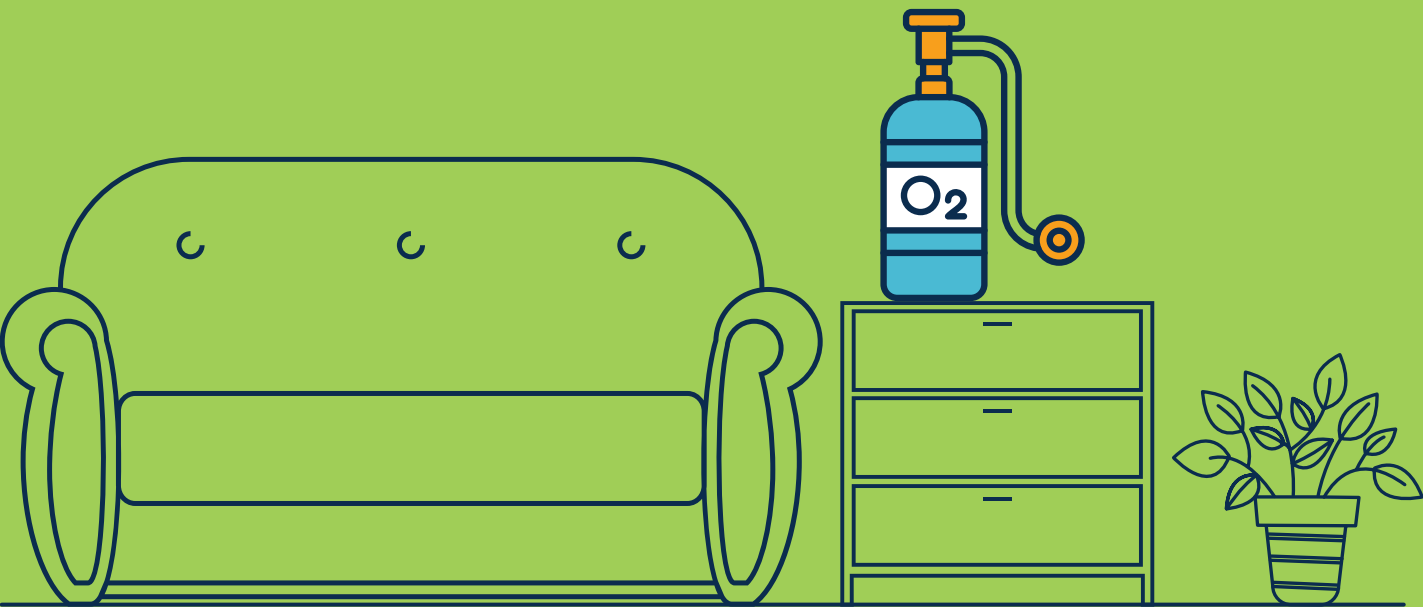
Always follow the guidance provided with your oxygen equipment.

Storing oxygen safely

Storing oxygen properly helps reduce any risk.

- Keep equipment in a well-ventilated, dry space
- Store it away from heat, direct sunlight and anything that could catch fire (like paper or curtains)
- Avoid storing it in areas that could block exits or escape routes

If you have oxygen in your home, please let us know. We can record this and share it with the Fire Service if needed, and make sure you have the right support to stay safe.



Water safety

We check your water system before you move in to make sure it's clean and safe. If your home has been empty for a while, there's a small risk of bacteria called Legionella developing - but it's easy to prevent.

What is Legionella?

Legionella is a type of bacteria that can cause a lung infection called Legionnaires' disease. It spreads through tiny droplets of water, such as from showers or taps.

The risk is low, but some people are more vulnerable, including older adults and those with certain health conditions.

After your home has been empty

If your home hasn't been used for a couple of weeks or more, it's a good idea to refresh the water system.

You can do this by:

- Running hot taps for at least a minute
- Running your shower for around 10 minutes
- Flushing the toilet a couple of times

This is especially helpful after holidays or time away from home.

Everyday tips

A few simple habits can help keep your water safe:

- Clean your showerhead every few months
- Keep your hot water at a safe temperature
- Avoid leaving damp cloths over taps

Cleaning your showerhead

Cleaning your showerhead is simple and helps keep water flowing properly.

- Remove the showerhead
- Soak it in warm water with a household cleaner or vinegar
- Gently scrub away any build-up
- Rinse well before putting it back

Stored water systems

Most homes have mains-fed water, which is very low risk. If your home has a water tank, we carry out regular checks and maintenance to keep everything safe, including inspections, testing and cleaning where needed.



Electrical safety

Keeping your home safe from electrical risks is really important. Faulty wiring and appliances are a common cause of house fires, so regular checks help keep everything safe.

Electrical safety check

We carry out a full electrical safety check in your home at least every five years to make sure everything is safe and working as it should.

During this, we:

- Check wiring, sockets, switches and electrical systems
- Test any electrical items we've provided
- Carry out all work using qualified professionals

If we find anything that isn't safe, we'll put it right.

Why this matters

We follow strict safety laws to make sure your home's electrical systems are safe and well maintained.

Regular checks help spot issues early and reduce the risk of fire or injury.

What to expect

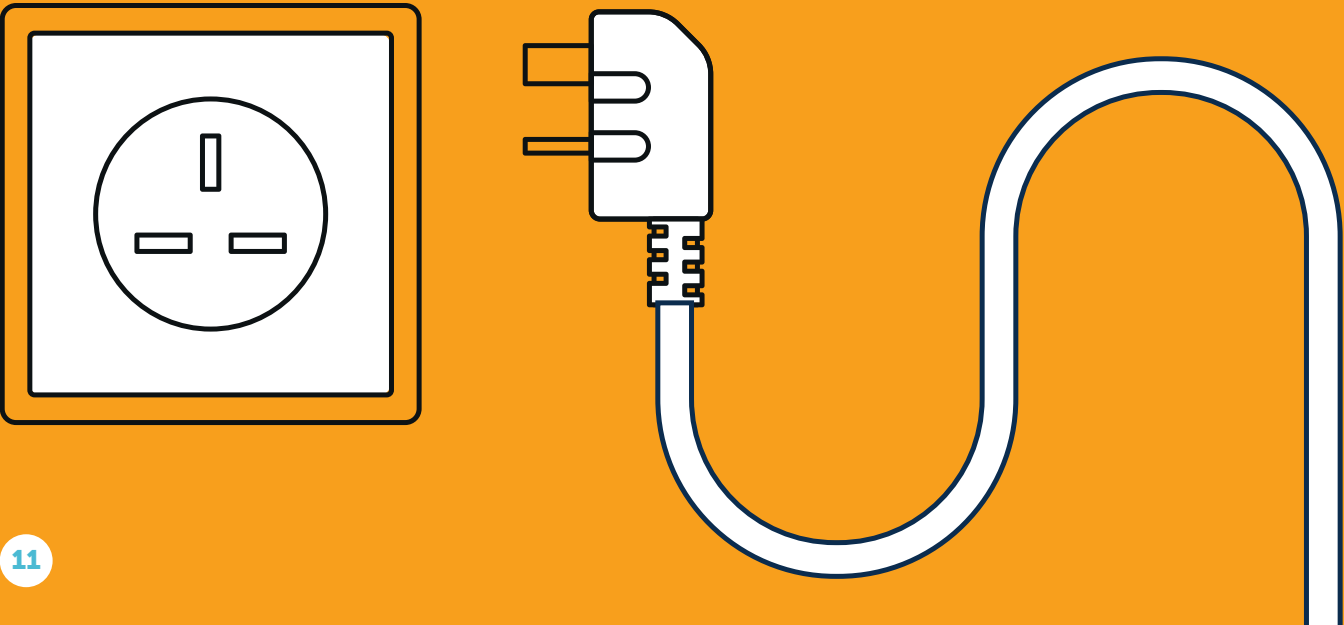
Your electrical safety check usually takes between two and four hours, depending on your home. If you have any questions before or during the visit, just get in touch - we're happy to help.

What we ask from you

To help us keep your home safe:

- Please let us know if you need to rearrange your appointment
- Report any electrical concerns as soon as possible
- Make sure your own appliances are safe and well looked after
- Use a qualified professional for any electrical work

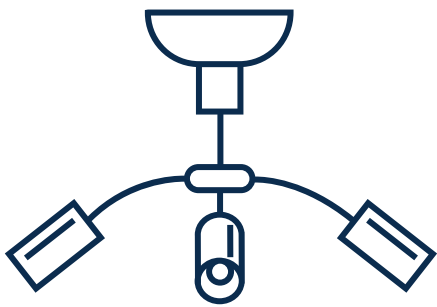
If you're planning any changes, like adding sockets or installing new equipment, just check with us first so we can guide you through it.



Staying safe at home

A few simple checks can help reduce risks:

- Avoid overloading sockets and extension leads
- Check cables and plugs for damage
- Use the correct charger for each device
- Keep electrical items away from water (especially in bathrooms)
- Be careful when drilling into walls, as cables and pipes may be hidden



We carry out a full electrical safety check in your home at least every five years

Meter tampering

Tampering with gas or electricity meters is dangerous and illegal. It can put you, your home, and your neighbours at serious risk.

It can lead to:

- Fires or explosions
- Electric shocks or burns
- Gas leaks and health risks

If something doesn't seem right, it's always best to report it.

Reporting concerns

If you're worried about meter tampering or energy theft, you can report it anonymously:

- Call **0800 023 2777**
- Or report it online at **www.stayenergysafe.co.uk**



Damp, mould and condensation

Damp and mould can affect your home and your health if they are not dealt with early. They can cause damage to walls, furniture and belongings, and may lead to breathing problems or make existing conditions worse.

We take all reports seriously and will always work with you to find the cause and put things right.

Understanding the causes

Damp and mould can happen for different reasons. Understanding the cause helps us fix the problem properly.

Condensation

This is the most common cause. It happens when warm, moist air meets cold surfaces like windows or walls. Everyday activities such as cooking, showering and drying clothes create moisture in the air.

Penetrating damp

This is caused by water getting into your home from outside, such as through a damaged roof, walls or guttering.

Rising damp

This comes up from the ground into walls, usually where a damp proof course is missing or damaged.

Leaks and plumbing issues

Leaks from pipes, sinks, baths or showers can also cause damp, particularly in kitchens and bathrooms.

What to look out for

You may notice:

- Damp patches on walls or ceilings
- Black, white or green mould growth
- Condensation on windows or cold surfaces
- A musty or damp smell

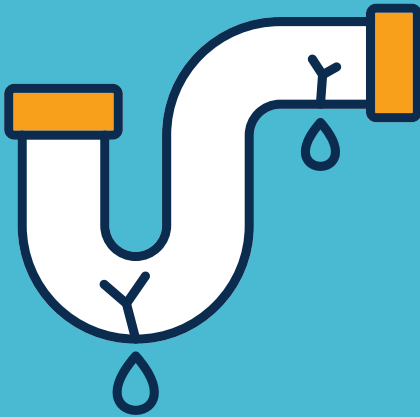
Mould often appears in corners, behind furniture, near windows or in areas with little airflow.

What we do

We will:

- Respond quickly when you report damp or mould
- Arrange a visit to inspect your home
- Identify the cause of the problem
- Carry out repairs where needed
- Provide advice and support to help prevent it returning

If the issue is serious or affects vulnerable customers, we will prioritise our response.



What you can do

There are a few simple steps that can help reduce condensation and prevent mould.



Reduce moisture in the air

- Use lids on pans when cooking
- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed when in use
- Avoid drying clothes on radiators



Keep your home warm

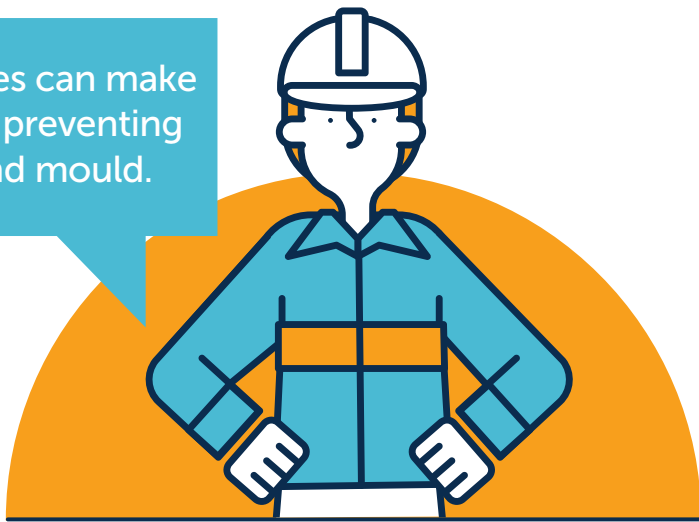
- Try to maintain a steady temperature where possible
- Avoid letting rooms get very cold



Let fresh air in

- Open windows regularly, even for short periods
- Use extractor fans where available
- Keep vents and air bricks clear

These small changes can make a big difference in preventing condensation and mould.



Treating small areas of mould

If you have a small amount of mould, you can carefully wipe it away using a suitable mould treatment and follow the product instructions.

Avoid brushing or vacuuming mould, as this can spread spores into the air.

If the mould returns or gets worse, please contact us.

Reporting damp and mould

It's important to tell us as soon as you notice a problem. Acting early helps prevent it from getting worse and keeps your home safe.

Lift safety

We're responsible for making sure lifts in our buildings are safe, reliable and regularly maintained.

What's covered?

This includes:

- Passenger lifts in communal areas
- Domestic lifts, stairlifts and hoists in your home

What we do

We carry out regular checks and maintenance to keep lifts running safely and smoothly.

This includes:

- Routine inspections by qualified contractors
- Planned servicing
- Repairs and upgrades where needed
- Meeting all required safety standards

Why it matters

Lifts are an important part of many homes and buildings. While issues are uncommon, regular checks help prevent breakdowns and keep everyone safe.

What's involved?

A specialist contractor will visit to inspect and service the lift and report any issues.

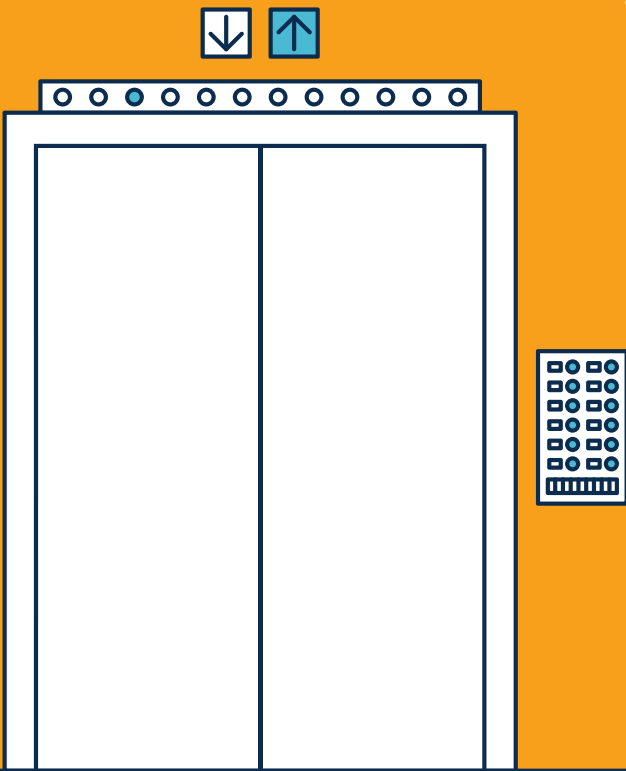
If any work is needed, we'll arrange this as quickly as possible to minimise disruption. If you ever have concerns about a lift, you can contact us at any time.

Lift safety checks

- Passenger lifts are inspected twice a year and serviced four times a year
- Stairlifts and hoists are serviced twice a year

Staying safe

- Passenger lifts have an emergency button if you need help
- If you use a lift in your home, it's a good idea to keep your phone with you.



Alterations to your home

Before making any changes to your home, it's important to check with us first. This helps make sure everything is safe and suitable for your property.

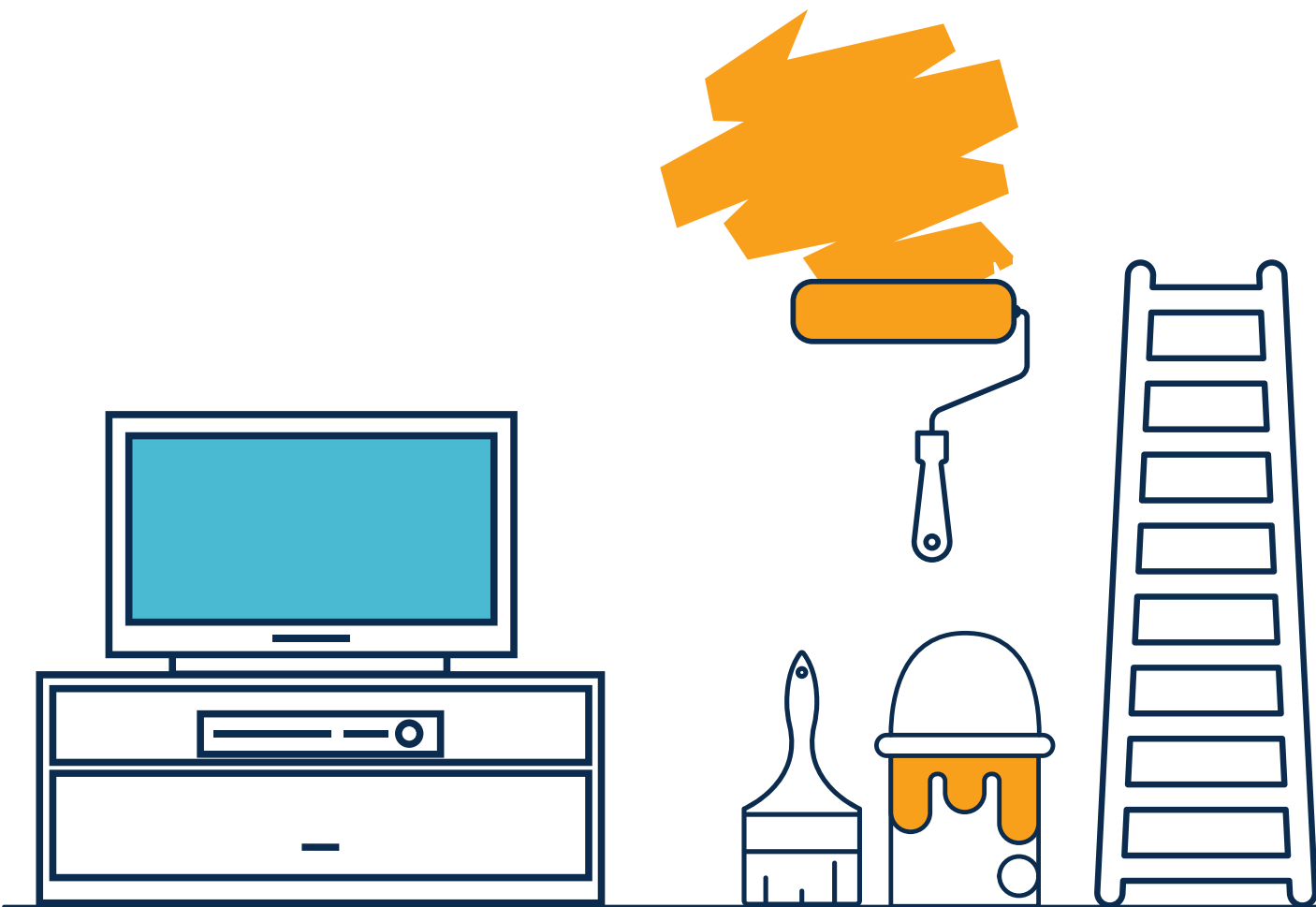
This includes larger changes like extensions or conservatories, as well as smaller updates such as changing layouts, replacing kitchens, or altering fixtures.

If you're unsure whether you need permission, just get in touch - we're happy to advise.

What you can do without permission

You don't need permission for simple decorating, as long as it doesn't affect the structure of your home.

If your home was built before 2000 and your plans involve drilling into walls or ceilings, it's best to contact us first so we can check for things like asbestos.



BBQ safety tips



Planning a BBQ? Whether it's gas, charcoal or disposable, a few simple steps can help keep things safe.

BBQs should always be used outdoors and never inside a tent, caravan, cabin or your home - even after cooking.

Using your BBQ safely

- Never leave a BBQ unattended while it's lit
- Make sure it's fully extinguished before going to bed
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions

It's also helpful to be aware of the signs of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, such as headaches, dizziness or feeling sick.

Gas BBQs and camping equipment

If you're using gas equipment, a few extra checks can help:

- Check hoses and connections for any damage
- Turn off the gas before changing cylinders (always do this outdoors)
- Avoid over-tightening connections
- Turn off the gas cylinder first after cooking, then the controls
- Follow guidance on how to check for gas leaks



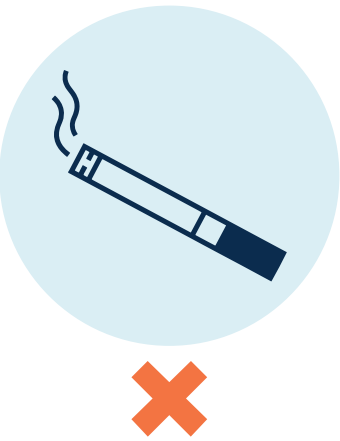
Balcony safety tips

Balconies are great spaces to relax, but it's important to use them safely.

A few simple things can help:

- Make sure cigarettes are fully put out
- Never throw cigarettes or anything lit from a balcony
- Avoid using BBQs on balconies
- Keep an eye on children and pets at all times

If you notice any damage to railings or the structure, please let us know so we can take a look.



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