

BELVOIR!

INFORMATION GUIDE

Welwyn & St Albans

Award winning UK lettings & estate agents



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To report a repair please visit <https://belvoir-welwyn.fixflo.com>

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Throughout your tenancy you are bound to come across a few maintenance issues. Whilst some of them are likely to require the attention of a trained engineer, for the smaller everyday issues why not refer to our below guides to help you manage your home

General Maintenance

Unblocking a sink, drain or toilet

Sinks in the kitchen and bathroom can easily become blocked with food waste or hair, if you start to notice the water in your sinks or showers is draining slowly or the toilet re-fills high each time it's flushed, you may need to unblock your drains.

To avoid large blockages that will ultimately require a plumber to rectify, we recommend regularly using domestic drain unblocking chemicals which can easily be purchased from supermarkets or hardware stores. You may also want to invest in a small plunger to help remove minor blockages.



Helpful Tips:

- Never pour grease or cooking fat down the sink or drain.
- Carefully remove any food waste from plates before rinsing in the sink.
- Do not flush wet wipes, make up wipes, sanitary towels or other items down the toilet – dispose of these in a bin!
- Remove excess hair from the plughole after each time you use the shower to avoid blockages.

****Be aware that if a plumber is called to a blockage that is a result of tenant negligence, then you could be responsible for the invoice!**

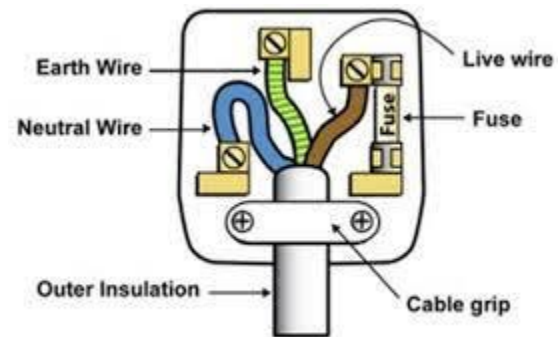
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Replacing a plug fuse.

If your fuse box trips repeatedly, or always trips when you try to use a certain appliance this may mean that the fuse to that appliance itself needs replacing.

To change the plugs fuse – unplug the appliance, unscrew the plastic casing and remove the fuse. Check its amperage (usually 13A) and replace with a new fuse of the same amperage – these can be purchased from any hardware store. Plug the appliance back in and test it.



Changing a lightbulb.

During your tenancy you will be responsible for changing any lightbulbs that need to be replaced.

- Turn off the power
- Allow the bulb to cool before touching it
- Always reach the bulb safely, ask a friend to help if it requires you standing on a ladder.
- Take the bulb out of the socket – this will depend on the type of bulb;

Bayonet Mount - this has two prongs which stick out of each side of the base. Hold firmly and push gently upwards into the fitting then turn anticlockwise as far as possible (usually only a quarter round) and then remove.

Screw Fitting – this type of bulb simply needs to be gently twisted anticlockwise until it is released from the socket.

- Replace the bulb with a new one of the same wattage and fitting type.

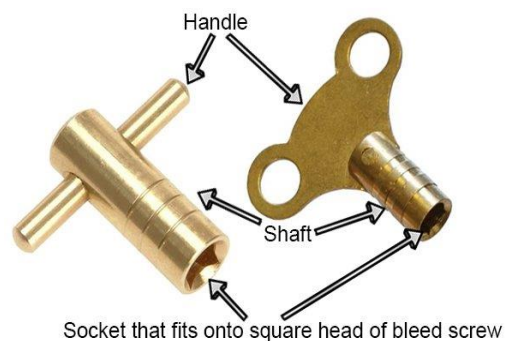
Helpful tips:

- Remove the bulb and carefully take it with you to the shop to make sure you get the correct type.
- Save money and the environment by using 'energy efficient' bulbs.
- Never use a higher wattage than recommended on the fitting or shade label.

Bleeding a Radiator

Sometimes air gets trapped in the heating system or individual radiators, this stops the heating working as efficiently as it should and also stops your house getting as warm as it can too!

1. Turn the heating on and check each radiator is turned up to hot (usually a small tap on the end of the radiator where the pipes connect it to the wall)
2. Find out which radiators need bleeding – you're looking out for cool spots. (Usually at the tops of radiators when the bottom is hot.)
3. Use a flat head screw driver or radiator bleed key (available at most hardware stores) and turn the valve (located at the top of the radiator) until you hear a hissing noise.
4. Keep a cloth underneath with the other hand to catch any escaping liquid.
5. As soon as liquid starts to escape, close the valve quickly and tightly. The radiator should now begin to heat evenly from top to bottom.



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Hard water areas.

Hertfordshire is a predominately hard water area; this means that you are more likely to have lime scale build up on your taps and water based appliances.

Regular cleaning with specific 'lime scale removing' cleaning products will help prevent this damaging the appliance or item irreparably.

Do not forget lime scale also builds up where you might not be able to see it – inside washing machines, or under the water line of your toilet. Make sure you use cleaning products in your washing machine such as Calgon and occasionally run a boil wash, without clothes, to help prevent build up, as well as regularly bleaching your toilet overnight.



Remember limescale may cause further maintenance issues within your property, it is essential to keep your taps and showers head free from limescale to ensure they work efficiently, if you do experience low water pressure from your shower please ensure you soak the shower head in limescale remover before you contact us.

ALWAYS READ THE LABELS! These products tend to be heavy duty so make sure you follow the directions and only use it on suitable surfaces, and keep yourself safe by ventilating the room well too

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Condensation and Ventilation

Condensation in rental properties is the most common problem our management department deals with. If it is not wiped away each day, if left, it can cause mould and water damage on walls, furniture, clothes and window frames. This in turn can damage curtains, window blinds, windowsills, grout and sealant. A damp environment can also encourage the growth of mites and can increase the risk of respiratory illness.

What is condensation?

When the moisture that is always present in the air becomes cold, tiny droplets of water will appear. This is most commonly seen on your breath on a cold day, or on the mirror misting over when you have a bath. Condensation occurs during cold weather, when wet or dry. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. It can often be found in corners, on or near windows, behind wardrobes and cupboards and often occurs on north facing walls.



What can you do?

It is possible to reduce or eliminate condensation. Some of the simple methods are:

1. Wipe down windows and sills every morning
2. Wring out clothes rather than drying them on radiators
3. Use sponge strips and condensation channels (buy from DIY shops)

Treat the mould if it is already in the property and if done properly, mould should not reappear. Wipe down the wall and window frames with diluted bleach or fungicidal wash. Dry clean mildewed clothes and shampoo carpets. Use a vacuum cleaner – do not try to brush mould away. After treatment one can redecorate using a quality fungicidal paint to help prevent mould, but, the best way to tackle condensation is to eliminate the dampness in the property.

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Produce less moisture!

- **When cooking** – cover pans and do not allow kettles to boil endlessly.
- **When washing** – dry clothes outside if possible, or in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open. Ensure your tumble dryer vents externally (unless a self-condensing type).
- **Bathroom/En Suites** – After bathing/showering open windows year-round to allow steam and moisture to leave the room. Keep door to room closed, to ensure moisture does not escape to other rooms. If steam and moisture cannot leave the room, mould would eventually appear.

Ventilate, ventilate & ventilate

To reduce moisture, increase the ventilation in the property. Keep a small window open whenever someone is in the room. Even people's breath creates moisture! Kitchens and bathrooms need much more ventilation when cooking, washing up, drying clothes and bathing. Open windows wider and close doors when these rooms are in use even if the room has an extractor fan. This will help stop moisture reaching other rooms, especially bedrooms that are often colder and more prone to condensation. Ventilate cupboards and wardrobes and avoid overfilling them. Position furniture, where possible against internal walls rather than outside walls. Do not block permanent ventilators and do not go overboard with draught-proofing rooms that suffer from condensation. The draughts are a form of vital ventilation.

Turn up the heat

Try to keep on a little background heat throughout the day, even if no one is in. This is particularly important in flats and bungalows where rooms are not heated from a warm lounge below. Or keep a small heater in each room to take the chill off the room. A dehumidifier will help dry out damp rooms especially in new homes. They can also be useful to draw out moisture in damp warm rooms.

Please remember that condensation is not just a problem with the property it is at least equally caused by the use of the property and failure to ventilate adequately.

***Any damage which occurs in rental properties due to a Tenant's failure to wipe away condensation and/or poor ventilation, can result in the Tenant being held liable for repair and replacement costs.

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Smoke Alarms

There are 3 main types of smoke alarms,

1. Mains- wired into the main electrics of the property and usually has a backup battery
2. Concealed unit- usual life span around 7-10 Years
3. Battery powered- Battery must be changed when needed

Looking after your smoke alarms

Your smoke alarms need regular maintenance:

- **Once a year** replace the battery - this is also applicable for mains powered smoke alarms that have a battery back-up- it is important to remember this is your responsibility as the tenant.
- **Once a week** check the alarm by pressing the test button.
- **Once a year** vacuum and wipe the smoke alarm casing to ensure dust isn't blocking the sensor chamber.

If your smoke alarm is making an intermittent bleeping/chirping noise, please follow these steps:

- Clean the alarm as per the instructions above.
- Test the alarm by pressing the 'test' button.
- Change the battery (unless it is a concealed alarm).

If your smoke alarm continues to bleep, please report this to Belvoir using the online maintenance system- <https://belvoir-welwyn.fixflo.com>

Smoke alarms save lives!

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Appliances

Dishwasher

If safe to do so, please perform the following checks on your dishwasher before raising the issue:

Dishwasher not cleaning dishes properly

Make sure to use the correct amount of rinse aid and dishwasher salt. This will otherwise cause dishes to come out "streaky" and glasses will appear cloudy.

Often, cleaning the spray arm, filter and float will solve the problem. Consult the manual for how to do this for your appliance. Below are some general guidelines:

- Remove the spray arm and clean out the holes. Doing this will also give you access to the filter.
- Clean the filter usually accessed under the spray arm. Rinse it thoroughly, making sure to remove any food debris. You can also use an appropriate vacuum cleaner to remove the finer debris.
- Clean the float in order to make sure it can move up and down freely.

If this does not help solve your issue please continue to report your repair via <https://belvoir-welwyn.fixflo.com>.

Fridge

If safe to do so, please perform the following checks before raising an issue:

Water accumulates in the base of the fridge

This is often caused by a blocked drain tube/defrost outlet. In most fridge/freezers there will be a defrost outlet. This is usually a round hole located in the back wall of the fridge, near the compartments at the bottom. Look to see if anything has blocked the hole. Some fridges come with an unblocking utensil, you can also use something like a straw or a cotton bud. Unblock the hole and once done, pour a (very) small amount of warm water into the hole to check it drains properly again.

Make sure you defrost the fridge on a regular basis.

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Electric Oven

Oven not working correctly,

If safe and convenient to do so please perform the following checks before reporting an issue:

1. Please check your fuse box or consumer unit to see if circuit breakers require resetting
2. Please ensure that the isolation switch is in the 'on' position.

Is the oven clock set? A common problem is that an electric oven will not function unless this is done. The time does not have to be correct. However, the timer must not be flashing. Please check your instruction manual for instructions on how to resolve this.

Washing Machine

Washing machine not draining properly?

Please check to see if the washing machine filter is clear of anything causing a blockage. Refer to the appliance manual for how to clean the filter. The repair may be chargeable if items left in your laundry like coins have blocked the filter or any other parts of the washing machine. If your washing machine still does not drain, please continue to report the problem to <https://belvoir-welwyn.fixflo.com>

Re-set your washing machine.

- This can usually be done by safely unplugging and plugging the machine (wait 1 minute between each step). Note that these are general guidelines and that you should refer to your appliance manual.

Run a service wash on your machine.

- A service wash means spinning the machine without any clothes in it at a high temperature. Most manufacturers now recommend you use a certain cycle to do this or new-er machines provide a special drum-cleaning program. Please refer to your appliance manual. If possible, also clean the soap drawer and rubber seal around the door. If these are not cleaned properly, mould and bacteria can fester in the washing machine.

If the above has not solved the problem, please continue to submit your repair request.

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Gas Boilers

No heating or hot water

The first thing you should check if you have no hot water is whether or not your boiler is working. Depending on the type of boiler you have, the first sign that your boiler is not working will often be a change from the usual display colour along with an error code.

Some fault codes can be easily rectified yourself with a simple boiler reset, whilst others may need professional attention.

Boiler is working but no hot water

Check your water, gas and electricity supply

If there is no display on your boiler, this may indicate that the problem is with your **power supply** - checking to see if you have electricity to your lights and sockets will quickly confirm this. You may also want to check your main fuse box. If you have experienced a recent power cut, this may have also affected your boiler settings.

Make sure there is a **water supply** - if no water comes from the taps, there may be a temporary supply interruption. Whilst this may seem obvious, it is easy to overlook in the heat of the moment.

Finally, make sure you have a **gas supply** by checking other appliances such as your gas cooker.

Checking your boiler is set correctly

Boiler settings

Water and heating - not heating only. There is always a possibility that the settings may have been adjusted without your knowledge or by mistake. Also check that the hot water is set to a reasonable temperature.

Check your timer

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Another factor to consider before calling an engineer or plumber is to check your timer. This may have been affected by the clocks changing, power supply, back-up batteries failing or even somebody altering the settings without you knowing.

It should be easy to see at the timer control panel if the boiler is currently active for hot water. If you are not sure, check your timer manual.

Check your boiler pressure

If your home runs on a combi-boiler, then low pressure may be the reason for your lack of hot water. The water pressure for a standard domestic boiler is usually around 1.5 bar and will be displayed on a gauge known as a 'Manometer', usually located where the water supply pipes are connected to the boiler.

If your pressure is below the normal operating range, follow this guide to re-pressurise.

Important: Be sure to consult the operating manual first to ensure that you are able to repressurise the boiler yourself. If there are no instructions for this or if you have any doubts, be sure to seek the advice of a qualified engineer.

How to increase boiler pressure

Only attempt to re-pressurise the boiler if your manual indicates/confirmation from approved contractor that it is safe to do so and you are comfortable performing this task yourself. The following steps should be followed:

Find the location of your filling-loop and pressure gauge. You should find that the filling loop handles are at a 90° angle to the flow of the pipe.

Before beginning, make sure you can see the pressure gauge at all times whilst accessing the filling loop. The operating pressure for most systems is around 1 bar, however it is recommended that you consult the manual for your boiler to confirm. The correct pressure level will often be indicated on the gauge for modern systems with a green area.

1. Turn the system off.
2. Slowly turn both of the filling loop handles until they match the direction of the pipe - as you do this, you should be able to hear water flowing.
3. Take care to observe the gauge at all times to avoid over-pressurising the boiler. It may be easier to get somebody you trust to help you. Once you have restored the correct pressure, ensure the handles are fully closed.

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Frozen condensate pipe.

If your boiler starts developing random faults which are preventing your central heating from operating as it normally does, then it may be worth investigating to see if your system is being affected by a frozen condensate pipe.

1. Diagnosis

First things first you need to establish if the issue actually isolated to your condensate pipe. If your condensate pipe is frozen then your boiler will likely exhibit either some flashing lights or some form of fault code - it's advisable to check the manufacturer guidance that will have been supplied with your boiler to see if the code relates to a frozen pipe problem. Other tell tell signs include the emergence of a "slurping" sound when your boiler is switched on.

2. Reset Boiler

Before jumping the gun, it is worth resetting your boiler to see if the issue that was present has now resolved itself. If the pipe was frozen but has since thawed then the errors present on your boilers dashboard may no longer be applicable. Try resetting your boiler – if the fault indicators are still present then it's time to try and address the issue itself.

3. Locate external pipe (outside)

The condensate pipe removes water from the boiler. As such you will likely find a white or grey plastic pipe emanating from the location of your boiler to the outside wall of the property. In some installations the amount of pipework that runs external to the property can be fairly substantial. As a large amount of the pipe is exposed to the outside conditions, when the weather turns cold the pipe may get blocked when any water within the pipe freezes and turns to ice. Sometimes it will be obvious that the pipe is frozen however in other cases the symptoms will be more subtle, hidden away within the pipe itself.

4. Time to thaw

The easiest way to deal with a frozen condensate pipe is to put it in contact with warm water. A couple of jugs of warm water poured over the exterior of the pipework is a great remedy. Increasing the temperature within the pipe can cause the ice blockage to

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subside. If you do not have a jug then you could also try a warm flannel or hot water bottle. It's important that you refrain from using boiling water, as although this will likely melt the ice quicker, you may cause more damage as the extreme contrast in temperatures may cause the plastic pipe to crack.



5. Reset Boiler (again!)

With the frozen blockage hopefully now dealt with, it should now be a simple matter of returning to your boiler and hitting the reset button. If the fault signals are still present then it may be worth consulting your boiler instructions.



Contact Information

Our usual office Hour are:

Monday- Friday 9am - 6pm, **Saturday** 9am- 4pm, **Sunday** closed.

For any maintenance issues that you may have during your tenancy, please report in writing directly to our Fixflo system <https://belvoir-welwyn.fixflo.com>

IN AN EMERGENCY PLEASE CONTACT:

For emergencies out of office hours, please refer to your landlords homecare cover provider eg British Gas, if you have one.

If not, please contact the following contractors:

Plumbing - Ray Woodman 07860 634 737 **OR** Lee Bartlet LJB Property Services - 07970 909732

Electrician - 07921 860 391 Carl **OR** 07751 535 428 James

Heating (Gas) Ray Woodman 07860 634 737 **OR** Lee Bartlet LJB Property Services - 07970 909 732

Drains - 07711 006 878 Paul -Crystal Drains

Locksmith- Herts locksmith 01707567130

These are approved contractors whom we would suggest are used. If they are unable to attend you may contact an alternative contractor on the understanding that the cost will only be met if found to be both reasonable and a genuine emergency.

If you think you can smell **gas**, please contact **TRANSCO** on **0800 111 999** - they will investigate free of charge.

Should you call one of our contractors and no problem is found, please be aware that you will be charged accordingly.

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