

# thirteen

Managing and building homes

## New home user guide

Flat 6

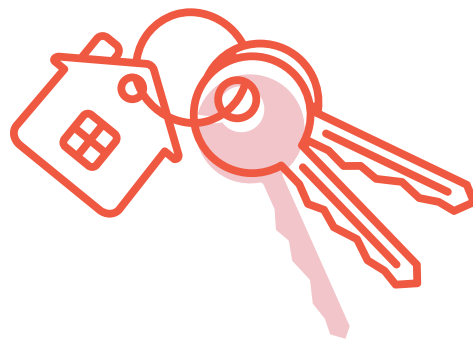
# Contents

<b>Welcome to your new home</b> .....	4
<b>Key information</b> .....	5
<b>Do's and don'ts</b> .....	6
<b>Housekeeping</b> .....	9
<b>General maintenance</b> .....	11
<b>Useful contacts</b> .....	12





# Welcome to your new home



**Dear customer,**

**Welcome to your new Thirteen home.  
We hope you are settling in well.**

We are committed to providing quality homes and the information in this guide is intended to help you make the most of your new home.

Please take the time to familiarise yourself with the contents of this guide. It includes lots of helpful and valuable information to enhance your enjoyment of your new home.

Over the next few days, you should carry out several checks to make sure everything is in order:

- Please familiarise yourself with the operation of your smoke alarms and check that they work by pressing the test button.
- Ensure you have operating instructions for all your appliances and electrical items.
- If you have moved into a flat or apartment, check that the common areas are as expected.
- Check that your garden boundaries are as you expected.

- Confirm that all windows and doors open, close and lock properly.
- Check all services (gas, water and electricity) are connected and are in working order and agree on meter readings.

## Standard of finish

Every house is different and yours has been individually built and handcrafted by humans, not robots! That means there will inevitably be some variation in the finished appearance. This is due to the nature of the materials and the way in which they are applied. Slight variations are normal and to be expected.

If you feel that an element of your new home is not finished to the required standard, please get in touch with us.



# Key information

## Reporting defects

To report a defect, please contact Thirteen on **0300 111 1000** or email **defects@thirteengroup.co.uk**.

For shared ownership properties, please refer to your lease and handover documentation for information about your builders warranty period (and Thirteen's responsibility for repairing defects during and after the warranty period, if applicable).



## Normal emergencies

When you first move into your property, familiarise yourself with where your water stop tap is in case of a leak. This is usually under your sink.

Familiarise yourself with where your fuse board is located and switch identification in case you need to turn your electricity off for any reason.

In the event of a power cut, first check if any neighbours are affected in case it is the electricity board you need to contact. Northern PowerGrid can be contracted on **105**. If it is just your property that is affected, first check the fuse board in case a fuse has tripped. Otherwise, contact Thirteen.

In the event of a water leak, if the leak is not containable, look to turn your water off by the stop tap to prevent any further damage and call Thirteen. Where possible, try to investigate what may be causing the leak. For example, if there is water on a ceiling above a bathroom, then could it be the bath or shower? If possible remove the bath panel to check for water or signs of water damage. All this will help Thirteen get the right person to resolve this for you.



# Do's and don'ts

Like most new things, a home needs to be taken care of. In the first few months, your home should be allowed to 'settle' – this includes allowing it to dry out.

During this time, you may notice some minor cracks in walls, gaps in joinery and white deposits on walls. All are entirely normal in new homes. There are things you can do to reduce this happening by following the steps outlined in this guide.

## Condensation and ventilation

Condensation is caused by steam or water vapour coming in contact with cold surfaces, such as walls, ceilings and windows. Condensation can result in the appearance of mould on interior surfaces and even on finishings.

Condensation will gradually reduce as the building dries out, but you should try and avoid contributing to it. There are a number of things you can do to protect your home, such as:

- Open windows and window vents to allow trapped moisture to escape.
- Cover pans when cooking to reduce steam, and use the kitchen extractor fan.
- Always use the bathroom extractor fan when bathing or showering.
- Avoid drying clothes indoors and on radiators.
- Heat your home evenly and consistently. Ideally, it would be best to leave your heating on low all day. Or if you are out, program your central heating to come on before you return home so your home has a chance to warm up.
- Wipe down condensation, especially around windows and on glass, to prevent mould growth.

The extractor fan boost will come on with the light in the bathroom, but there may be a designated switch in the kitchen. Usually, when the boost is not activated, extractor fans will have a trickle mode to allow moisture to be removed constantly. Do not switch off the fans at the isolation point.

## Condensation in roof space

In cold weather, you may notice moisture on the underside of the felt beneath the roof tiles. This is due to warm, moist air from your home passing into the roof space and settling on the cold surface of the felt and timbers. As the roof space is ventilated and breathable, this should gradually disperse.

We appreciate you may want to use your loft space for storage, but lofts in newly built properties are not made for storage. The roof structure is not designed to take the additional load of stored items and the loft insulation may prevent safe access. If vents have been provided in the eaves, they should not be blocked or covered over.

## Damp-proof course

The soil level around your home should be kept below the damp-proof course. Paths should also generally be kept two bricks below the damp proof course, except where these have been designed to provide level access into the home. Where air bricks or perpendicular vents have been installed, they should not be covered or blocked.

## Drains and toilets

Drains and toilets are for human and water waste only. Please do not put items down the drain and toilet, such as baby wipes, food or cooking waste, as these can cause blockages.

## Testing before carrying out work in your home

Extreme care needs to be taken when carrying out work to your home. Even if you are just hanging a picture or putting up shelves, there may be electrical devices, gas pipes or cables in the way. Before you start drilling holes or hammering nails, always take care to establish the correct position of cables or pipes which are embedded in walls or under floorboards.

Before starting any work, make sure you have checked the above and you are using the correct fixing for the job you are undertaking. If you are unsure, contact a registered qualified tradesperson to undertake the work or give advice.

We recommend letting the house fully dry out before decorating, as shrinkage cracks can appear. Decorating before this may mean decorating twice. Shrinkage cracks can quickly and easily be filled with filler before decorating.

## Electrical and gas registered qualified tradesperson

When making any improvements to your home or having any items serviced, such as boilers or cylinders, ensure you have a registered qualified tradesperson carry out the work.

Please contact us for approval on any improvements. Thirteen will undertake the required serving for rented properties.



## Fire and smoke alarms

Your home should have alarms such as smoke, heat and CO2 detectors. These alarms are usually fitted with a test button. We recommend these are tested regularly to ensure they are working efficiently. The most commonly fitted detectors are mains wired but have a battery backup fitted in case of a power cut. Should the detector beep intermittently, replace the battery. If this doesn't resolve the issue and your the property is either rented or within the warranty period then please call Thirteen.



## Safety during construction

Your home may be part of a development which is still under construction. It is important for your safety and that of your family that you read the following section carefully:

- Construction traffic will be moving about the development during the day. Please take extra care when walking and driving around the development and while passing construction traffic. Always make sure that the operator sees you.
- Do not enter the construction work areas or allow children to do so.
- During the construction period, a traffic management system may be necessary. Please abide by the signs displayed on site showing safe routes for walking and driving.
- Any visitors wishing to enter the construction area must report to the site office for permission.
- If you have pets, please always be conscious of their whereabouts.
- It may only be possible to add surface material to roads and driveways after legal completion. These areas are usually completed in sections and will be finished as soon as possible. Until then, please be careful not to trip hazards on unfinished surfaces.
- Avoid parking near curbs, which are higher than normal in such situations.
- Please report any streetlights not working or issues with the road to Thirteen.

## Your postal address

- It may take several months before your new address is added to other companies' databases, which are updated by Royal Mail. Please check that your address is registered by visiting **<https://www.royalmail.com/find-a-postcode>**. Please only contact us if your address is not listed.

# Housekeeping

## Lawn care

Lawns are a living entity and require general maintenance. In the summer months, lawns require regular watering. The best time is early evening when the day's heat has passed, and the lawn is no longer in direct sunlight.

When you first move in, it is likely your lawn is also quite new, which means it will not yet be established. We recommend not walking on a new lawn for at least six weeks to allow the grassroots to establish fully.

When you first come to cut the grass, leave the mower on its highest setting for the first couple of cuts to prevent ripping the grass before the roots have strengthened. Following this, the lawn can be cut regularly to match the growth rate.

During the winter, most lawns can be very wet, as most gardens are at this time of year and is nothing to be concerned about. Should your lawn remain wet into the spring, this could highlight a concern and it's worth calling us to discuss.

Every garden is different. Some receive a lot of sunlight and others can be pretty shady. When the lawn is first laid some areas may take better than others. This is because the turf that is applied is one type of grass and sometimes this type may not flourish as well in all areas of your garden. If this is the case and some areas struggle, these can be top-dressed with soil and re-seeded in the spring. If you are unsure what to do, you can seek advice from a specialist landscaper.

Lawns can be damaged by pets. If you have pets, try and avoid, especially female dogs, using the lawn as their toilet as this will burn the grass and cause yellow scorch marks.

During construction, the ground gets compacted. It can take up to 24 months for the ground to return to its original condition. This can result in the garden being boggy as the rainwater cannot pass through the compacted ground. A good recommendation is to use a garden fork to spike the lawn during wet weather to help with drainage.

## Shrinkage

New build homes contain a lot of moisture throughout the building process, which will take time to dry out thoroughly. It can take as much as 6 – 12 months. To minimise the effect this has on your new home, ensure the property is well ventilated by opening trickle vents and using extractor fans. Shrinkage cracks are accelerated by heat, so try and keep the property at a consistent temperature, and even through winter, ensure window vents are open so moisture can evaporate more naturally.





## Winter planning

British winters can see outside temperatures drop significantly, and some measures need to be taken to weatherproof your home.

Ensure your outside tap is turned off at the isolation point inside the property. The valve to isolate the outside tap is usually under your sink. Once isolated, drain any water from the tap by opening the tap head to prevent the water in the pipe from freezing and cracking the pipe. If the tap continuously drips, it has not been isolated correctly. Polystyrene covers can also be placed over the tap to prevent freezing.

Keep your heating at a consistent level. When the temperatures drop outside, it can cause pipes inside the property to freeze. Keeping your property at a constant temperature prevents the pipes from cooling completely, helping to avoid burst pipes and leaks.

## Heating your property

If your house is chilly, check your radiators to ensure they do not need bleeding. If your radiators are cool at the top and warm at the bottom, it could be because they have air in them and need bleeding.

To ensure your heating is working efficiently set your boiler to come on at the times that work best for you. Also make sure the thermostatic valves on your radiators are turned to the desired temperature. If a room feels cold, make sure the valve on the radiator is fully open to ensure you are getting maximum heat.

Boilers can sometimes drop pressure and need re-pressurising. Please refer to your boiler instructions for how to do this.

For rented properties, Thirteen will inspect and service the boiler every year.

# General maintenance

Over time, things like doors, kitchen drawers, windows and cabinets may require a slight adjustment. This is to be expected and is considered part of these items' normal maintenance.

When using cleaning products, ensure that the correct product is used to clean items such as taps, sanitaryware, worktops and kitchen cupboards. Too strong or abrasive a product can damage these items. If you are unsure, please refer to the manufacturer's guidance.

When you move in, your property may have been fitted with floor coverings such as vinyl flooring or carpets. These can stretch over time and are susceptible to damage by heavy foot traffic, furniture and general living conditions. To ensure the longevity of these items, clean them with approved cleaning products for the material specified.

If you live in a hard water area, you may see a build up of limescale. Ensure you regularly clean shower heads to prevent a pressure drop. Limescale can also build up on sanitaryware and taps, so ensure these are cleaned regularly to prevent damage.

Use a 3 in 1 light oil to keep moving parts free from squeaking, including hinges to doors, windows, fence gates and garage doors.



## Gutters and downpipes

Guttering should be cleaned out regularly to remove leaves and debris. Wet patches on the brickwork below may indicate that the gutters or downpipes are blocked or require repairing.

## Grout and sealant maintenance

Your wet rooms, such as bathrooms and ensuites, will have silicone seals around the sanitaryware and grout between the tiles on the walls. Over time, these items will need to be maintained as silicone can flex and the seal can break, especially around baths and shower trays. Grout between tiles can crack or wear away through showering and cleaning, and lack of maintenance can cause leaks, leading to severe damage. We recommend checking these areas regularly. If you are unsure what to do, please get in touch with us or a registered tradesperson for advice.



# Useful contacts

Local council website for sustainability help/advice

Fire safety – [www.gov.uk/firekills](http://www.gov.uk/firekills), [www.fireservice.co.uk/safety/](http://www.fireservice.co.uk/safety/)

Gas safety – [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk)

Electrical safety – [www.eca.co.uk](http://www.eca.co.uk)

Gas leaks – National gas emergency services: **0800 111 999**

Energy saving – [www.energysavingtrust.co.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.co.uk)

Recycling – [www.recyclenow.com](http://www.recyclenow.com)

