



# Staying, Safe and Warm



**Grŵp Cynefin**

Mwy na thai • More than housing

## Heating systems

We strive to ensure that all gas, oil, solid fuel and electrical appliances in our properties are safe, energy efficient and well maintained.

We will write to you before a service is due to give you advance notice and to let you know who the service contractor will be. Either the Association or a contractor will then confirm the date and time and give you contact details should you need to change the appointment.

When the contractor arrives, ask to see an identity card. The card will carry the Grŵp Cynefin logo as well as contractor details and photo.

## Gas servicing and safety checks

In order to meet legal safety requirements, all Grŵp Cynefin installed gas appliances (whether mains gas or LPG) are serviced annually and free of charge. This includes supply connections and heating systems, and in the case of LPG, the storage tank or bottles.

Your own appliances such as cookers are checked for gas safety, however you are responsible for getting your own appliances regularly serviced and ensuring that the cooking appliance has a Flame Safety Device. If a defect is found during our service the appliance will be disconnected. Providing a gas cooker chain or stability bracket is the your responsibility.



## What work is involved?

The gas service, usually taking no more than an hour, will be carried out by our Gas Safety registered contractor, and will give you the peace of mind that your appliances are safe and working well. You will also be provided with a Gas Safety certificate by the gas engineer before he leaves your home.

## Why are these works important?

A regular service will address all of the above and keep gas appliances in your home working efficiently and economically.

Every year in the UK some 30 people are killed and many others are affected by carbon monoxide poisoning from faulty gas installations such as fires and boilers in their homes.

Carbon monoxide is a particularly dangerous gas because you cannot smell it. Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, tiredness and nausea (feeling sick). Some of these symptoms can be mistaken for flu and other common viruses, or even food poisoning. Intensive exposure to carbon monoxide can kill you.

**Important: If you do not let us in to carry out this very important work, we will be forced to take legal action to get access, and you will be charged for the costs of any action we have to take.**

Simple rules to follow for gas heating

- Familiarise yourself with your gas meter and know how to turn the supply off in an emergency
- Familiarise yourself with the gas appliances and heating controls within your home
- Obtain a fire guard if there are young children or older people in your home
- Do not paint or adapt any gas fire or boiler case in your home
- Do not install a ceiling fan in a room without first obtaining our permission
- Do not tamper with or alter any internal controls of a boiler
- Do not dry clothes in or around a fire or a boiler
- Do not block any air vents as this will shut out fresh air that your gas appliance needs to burn
- Do not sleep in a room where there is a gas fire or back boiler unit installed

## Oil Fired Heating

Grŵp Cynefin installed oil-fired appliances are serviced annually and free of charge. This includes the storage tank, supply connections and heating systems.

However, you are responsible for arranging and paying for your oil delivery.

### Simple rules to follow for Oil Fired Heating

- Familiarise yourself with your oil supply system, and know where the fire safety valve is located, and how to turn the supply off in an emergency
- Familiarise yourself with the oil appliances and heating controls within your home
- Check the oil level in your tank regularly, and for signs of leakage
- Check immediately after a delivery (preferably before the supplier drives away) to make sure oil has not been spilled on the ground, or the tank or supply pipe has not been damaged or is leaking.
- You should report any spillage or leaking immediately to the Association, and in the case of spillage to the oil supplier. Oil contamination can be a serious offence.



## Solid Fuel Heating

There are three Golden Rules of safety for solid fuel

### **(Rule 1)** Proper ventilation

Heating appliances, whatever fuel they burn, need fresh air in order to function efficiently and safely. Efficient combustion relies on a constant and sufficient flow of air which cannot be provided if the room is completely airtight. If your home has draught-proofing or double-glazing fitted, you may need vents or airbricks in an exterior wall of the room. If vents or airbricks are already there, always ensure they are not blocked or covered.

### **(Rule 2)** Regular cleaning and sweeping

To enable your appliance to continue to operate safely and efficiently, it is absolutely essential that you do not allow soot or ash to build up where it can hinder or prevent the free flow of smoke and other products of combustion.

### **(Rule 3)** Correct fuel

To get the best out of the appliance and to reap the maximum benefits in terms of fuel efficiency, it is important to use the fuel that is recommended for your appliance. Incorrect fuels can damage the appliance and flue and can lead to a dangerous build-up of deposits which will block the chimney and cause toxic carbon monoxide (CO) fumes to be emitted into the room.



Always buy your solid fuel from an Approved Coal Merchant.

## Additional rules for open fires

- Never leave an open fire unattended without a fireguard.
- Always use a securely fitted fireguard when children are in the house.
- A carbon monoxide alarm should be fitted in the same room as the fire. You should test this on a weekly basis.

If your appliance begins to burn slowly, goes out frequently or if you smell or suspect fumes:

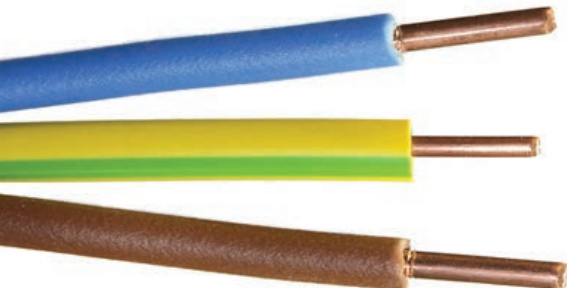
- Open doors and windows.
- Carefully put out the fire, or allow it to burn itself out.
- Do not stay in the room any longer than necessary.
- Do not attempt to re-light the appliance until a professional has checked it.

Further advice is available from the Solid Fuel Association on 0845 601 4406 / [www.solidfuel.co.uk](http://www.solidfuel.co.uk) or by contacting us.

## Electric Wiring and Heating

In accordance with electricity regulations, Grŵp Cynefin will test the electricity supply and wiring system of your home at regular intervals.

If your home is heated by electricity, such as night storage heaters, these will also be tested at the same time. You are responsible for servicing your own electrical appliances including cookers.



## Simple rules to follow for electric wiring and heating

- Familiarise yourself with your electricity supply system and know how to turn the supply off in an emergency
- Familiarise yourself with the heating controls within your home
- Check regularly for signs of burning around switches, sockets and other fittings
- Avoid overloading sockets
- Be careful to avoid drilling into walls above and near to power sockets
- Don't interfere with wiring or electrical sockets in any way
- You should report any damage to electrical sockets or failure of the electrical system to the Association
- Night storage heating should be on Economy 7 or similar low cost tariff. If you are thinking of switching energy providers, make sure the tariff is correct for your system or you may end up paying more (ask for the help of the Energy Wardens)

## Keeping my home free from condensation

What appears to be dampness on walls and windows is more likely to be condensation, which can lead to blackish mould on walls and ceilings especially in corners, on and around window frames, on furniture and clothes within cupboards.

You can reduce the potential of condensation and mould developing through:

- Reducing the amounts of moisture produced inside the home (e.g. dry your clothes outside if possible)
- Removing excess moisture (e.g. wipe away water from windows)
- Improving ventilation in your home to remove moisture (e.g. open a window for a while, don't cover vents)



- Keeping your home at a comfortable temperature
- Removing mould if it appears on surfaces
- Watching for any signs of recurrence of condensation and mould

For further guidance and to request a copy of Grwp Cynefin's Condensation Leaflet, please contact us.

## Preventing bursts and leaks

When you move into your home, you will be shown where the stop tap is that turns off the main water supply. Make sure you remember where it is, so you don't waste time searching if there's water pouring from a leaking pipe. It's usually under the kitchen sink or adjoining cupboard, but may be in a toilet or hallway. If you are unable to locate the stop tap, call us for advice. Also, turn it off and back on occasionally to make sure it has not seized up.

Leaks can occur in hot as well as cold weather, from expansion. If you are away from your home, whatever time of year, it is advisable to leave a key with a nearby relative or trusted neighbour, and ask them to check the house for you. Show them where the stop tap is, and give them our contact details.

Prolonged very cold weather can cause pipes, tanks and water fittings to freeze and burst if warmth does not reach them, and the damage to your home can be substantial. Remember to insure your home contents against such damage.





Here are some tips to prevent burst pipes in cold weather:

- Keep your home well heated, including at night when the temperature is lowest outside.
- Make sure that warmth reaches the bathroom and toilet. Don't turn off the radiator in there, and leave the door open when they are not being used. This is even more important if the bathroom/toilet faces north or east and does not get the sun during the day.
- Keep the kitchen warm (and where the washing machine is located), and leave the doors of any cupboards with pipes in them open overnight. Do the same for the main stopvalve cupboard.
- Flowing water does not freeze so easily, so open the highest cold water tap in your home until it flows a little (more than dripping), especially overnight. This will help keep the water supply flowing into your house from the street, and internally. For those of you with water meters, we acknowledge that you'll be using a little more water, but isn't this better than damage?
- Flush your toilets too for the same purpose, and if the cistern lid is not locked, lift it off so that warmth reaches the valve.
- If you find that water no longer flows from a tap, or if the cistern is not refilling after flushing, then a pipe is probably frozen. If so, fill your kettle and a saucepan with water (if you can) and then close the stopvalve where water supply enters your home. Then phone the Association's help line at once. Don't wait until the following morning. We will arrange for someone to call as soon as possible.
- Don't take a bath or use the washing machine in the meantime.

If you would like more advice about this in order to avoid freezing pipe problems, you are welcome to contact our Customer Service Team during office hours, and ask to speak to one of our technical staff. We much prefer to give you preventative advice than deal with emergencies!

If you are intending to be away from your home during the cold weather periods, leave the central heating on continuously with the thermostat down to 6 – 8 °C. This won't cost much, and is far better than burst damage. Get someone to call to check the water is still running from the taps, and leave our contact details with them. If a burst occurs because you have not been heating the property or have installed extra plumbing not insulated well enough yourself without our permission, you will be responsible for the repair cost.

## Precautions if you are away from home

If you leave your home for a period of time for example a holiday or planned hospital stay, please remember that you are still responsible for your home while you are away. Check that your contents insurance covers you while you are away.

This is particularly important during the winter months as cold weather will increase the risk of damage to the property from frozen pipes. To avoid these problems water should be turned off at the mains, and heating left on at a low temperature

## Connecting Appliances

Be careful if you are connecting kitchen appliances such as washing machines to the water supply and drainage. Check that hoses are properly connected and tightened, and recheck them for leaks once the appliance has been used.

## Artex

Some homes have 'Artex' finish applied to ceilings. You are advised not to attempt to remove it, sand it down or drill through it as any dust created in the process may be harmful to your health. If you wish to remove Artex or drill through it, please contact the Customer Service team for advice.

It is perfectly safe for you to paint an Artex ceiling with emulsion paint.

## Loft space

Any decking and lights, if provided, in the loft space will have been put there for maintenance purposes. The structure of the loft will not have been designed to take a heavy load. All roof timbers are necessary to carry the load, and should not be cut or removed on any account.

We would not recommend that you store items in the loft space due to the risk of mould, and you should be aware items stored in loft spaces will probably not be covered under your household contents insurance.

# Fire Safety

## Smoke Alarms

You should have at least one smoke alarm in your property. This is usually located in the hallway / first floor landing, and is usually wired into the mains electrical supply. If you are unable to reach the test switch on the unit safely, we can supply a testing pole.

You can use a domestic vacuum cleaner to remove dust / cobwebs from detectors, but you must not remove them.

## Fire doors

You should test your smoke alarm each week by pressing the test button in the centre of the unit. If you suspect your smoke alarm is not working or is damaged, please contact us.

## Communal Fire Alarm Systems

Your home may be fitted with one or more fire doors. For your own safety, you should not remove or disable their closing devices or wedge these doors open.

The fire detection equipment within some properties with communal areas consist of heat and smoke detection and is linked to a communal panel.

Vandalism can be life threatening to you and your neighbours. If malicious damage occurs to the fire safety systems provided, we shall notify the Police to raise an enquiry into life threatening behaviour. We will provide them with evidence to support their enquiry.



## Fire alarm testing in Communal Areas

The Association employs a contractor to regularly test the fire alarm and equipment in communal areas for flats and other schemes. If you suspect the alarm is not working properly, please let us know and we will arrange a special call out. However if you find the smoke alarm doesn't work, please report this immediately.

## In the event of a fire, be prepared

Plan your escape route, keep it clear of obstacles at all times and make sure that everyone knows where it is. Keep your keys to the front door in a handy position, though out of the way of burglars.

If you are uncertain of the escape route you must contact your Housing Officer immediately, so that we can be sure you understand the escape plan and can escape without needing assistance. We do this every time we allocate to a new tenant.

## Home Fire Risk Assessments

Did you know that fire fighters carry out free Home Fire Risk Assessments? Fire and Rescue Service officers are prepared to visit your home and accompany you around every room in your property to:

- Identify and make you aware of the potential fire risks in your home.
- Make sure you know what to do in order to reduce or prevent these risks.
- Help you put together an escape plan in case a fire breaks out in the future.
- Ensure you have a working smoke alarm.
- We will refer all new tenants to the Fire Service for a free home safety check

## Sprinklers

Due to the complexity of the building or specialist regulations within Wales your property may have sprinklers fitted as a fire suppression system.

A fire sprinkler system is an active fire protection measure, consisting of a water supply system, providing adequate pressure and flow rate to a water distribution piping system, onto which fire sprinklers are connected.

The system will only activate when a certain temperature is reached within the vicinity of the sprinkler heads. Only the sprinkler head in the vicinity of the fire will activate initially, if the fire spreads then other heads will also begin to operate.

Sprinkler heads are normally situated on the ceiling and covered with small plastic disks, these are **not** to be painted over since it will impede the performance and reliability of the system.

Please make yourself aware of the location of the stop tap for the sprinkler system.

If the sprinkler system has activated due to a fire incident, do not turn the system off until given the all clear by the fire service. (Within communal areas it is our responsibility to turn off the system following a fire).

## **Carbon Monoxide**

Carbon monoxide detectors are provided in some of our properties. Carbon monoxide fumes have no colour, taste or smell and can be produced by appliances that use gas, wood, oil, coal or smokeless solid fuel.

Carbon Monoxide is potentially fatal, and even low-levels of the poison can cause lasting damage to your health.

You should test your Carbon Monoxide alarm each week by pressing the test button in the centre of the unit. If you suspect your Carbon Monoxide detector is not working or is damaged please contact us immediately.

If you are unable to reach the test switch on the unit safely, we can supply a testing pole.

You can use a domestic vacuum cleaner to remove dust / cobwebs from detectors, but you must not remove them.

## **Garden barbeques**

Take great care when holding a barbeque. Keep away from trees, shrubs and grass, and anything inflammable. Have a full bucket of water nearby. Only use approved appliances, and follow the instructions carefully.

## Legionella

What is legionella and Legionnaires' disease? - Legionella are bacteria that are common in natural (rivers and lakes etc) and artificial water

systems, eg hot and cold water systems (storage tanks, pipework, taps and showers). We usually associate legionella with larger water systems, eg in factories, hotels, hospitals and museums, and cooling towers, but they can also live in smaller water supply systems used in homes and other residential accommodation. Other potential sources of legionella include spa and whirlpool baths, humidifiers (in factories) and fire-fighting systems (sprinklers and hose reels). Legionella bacteria can multiply in hot or cold water systems and storage tanks in residential properties, and then be spread, eg in spray from showers and taps. Legionella can survive in low temperatures, but thrive at temperatures between 20°C and 45°C. High temperatures of 60°C and over will kill them. Legionnaires' disease is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia caused by the legionella bacteria. It can affect anybody, but some people are at higher risk including those over 45, smokers and heavy drinkers, those suffering from chronic respiratory or kidney disease, and people whose immune system is impaired. Legionellosis is the collective name given to the pneumonia-like illnesses caused by legionella bacteria, including the most serious and well-known Legionnaires' disease, and also the similar but less serious conditions of Pontiac fever and Lochgoilhead fever.

### Reducing the Risk of legionella in your property:

Despite the above, the risk of legionella causing illness in small domestic properties is exceedingly low. Possibly the biggest risk is when you have been away from the property for more than a week or so eg on holiday elsewhere. Good practice in this situation is simply to run the taps (a very unlikely source

anyway) with hot water for minimum 60 seconds, and more importantly flush the shower head with warm water for minimum 60 seconds after a period of non-use (to do this, remove from holder before switching on the shower, then hold down over drain to lessen risk of inhaling sprayed droplets). Similarly flush the toilet twice to circulate fresh water through the system and empty the cistern. Shower spray heads also present a small risk in domestic properties, and should be dismantled and cleaned of scale and debris every 3-6 months.

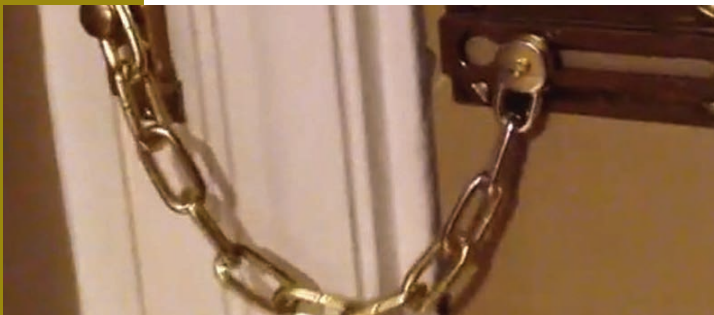
## Tips to help keep criminals out

### Doorstep Crooks

Some criminals won't go to the trouble of breaking into your home if they can just knock and be invited in. But don't get it out of proportion - you've probably had many genuine callers at your front door and not one trickster. Bogus callers come in all shapes and sizes: young kids, pregnant women, and men - in overalls, in uniform and in suits.

### Bogus Officials

Water board officials may require access to test water quality at the kitchen tap, following a water main burst, but will NEVER need to come into your home to test water pressure or repair leaks - even in emergencies. If they ever do need to get in they must send you a letter first making an appointment. Gas and electricity meter readers want you to check their identity before you let them in. If in doubt, ring up and check. Genuine callers don't mind this in the least. Keep the phone numbers handy. Shut the door while you're checking. As an additional safeguard you could always join the password scheme so the meter reader gives you an arranged password when they call.



## Look before you open

Always look to see who's at the door before you open.

## Door Viewer

If your front door doesn't have glass, fit a spy-hole. Or get into the habit of looking through a window near the door to see who is calling.

## Door Light

An outside light over the door will help you see a caller in the dark.

## Door Chain

If you need to open the door to make further checks, use a door chain or similar device.

### REMEMBER

- don't let people in until you know who they are
- keep the door locked while you check their story
- if you let someone in, stay with them at all times
- never part with money or other things, whatever they say
- get more than one estimate for work
- official organisations usually write first
- check identity cards thoroughly
- don't let callers put pressure on you to let them in;
- **IF IN DOUBT - KEEP THEM OUT**
- **IF SUSPICIOUS - RING THE POLICE**

