

Our empty home standard

When you move into a settle home, we want you to be comfortable. Before you move in, we'll make sure that your new home is safe and meets our settle home standard. Our empty home standard sets out what you can expect from the condition of your new home. If you are a settle homeowner, please see our separate document on homeownership.

There are three parts to our empty home standard:

- Making sure your new home is safe
- Getting your new home ready, as quickly as possible and to a quality standard
- Offering extra support

When a resident notifies us that they are leaving, we will visit before they leave to identify any work we will need to carry out before we can re-let the property. Completing this visit means we can make sure responsibilities for both settle and the leaving resident are maintained. It also means we can re-let promptly by planning works more effectively (for example items which take time to be made).

Our team will make sure your new home meets the standard set out below. Once they have completed their work, we will carry out an inspection to check that everything meets the settle home standard and that we are providing a quality home.

Making sure your new home is safe

Safety checks

We will:

- Carry out all appropriate safety checks (defined by legislation) and any work to ensure installations are working correctly and safely. For example, gas heating systems, electrical sockets and switches.
- Provide certification where required by law. As a minimum, this will include electrical (and where appropriate gas safety).
- Check the property for asbestos and ensure that it is either left in a safe condition or removed.
- Make sure that smoke, heat and carbon monoxide (where required) detectors are clean, secure and have been tested. We will check that there are working smoke detectors on each floor of the home and test them and provide a carbon monoxide detector if this is required. Replacing batteries in safety devices is your responsibility once you have moved into your new home.

Damp, mould and condensation

We will:

- Check your new home is watertight and free from damp, mould and excess condensation.
- Ensure adequate ventilation is in place, including extractor fans, windows which open and air vents in appropriate places.
- Where required, service any installed mechanical ventilation systems that are already in place.

Getting your new home ready

We'll make sure that all of our homes meet or exceed the government's Decent Homes Standard before they are let. An energy performance certificate (EPC) will be made available for you. Occasionally we may need to complete some of the work below once you have moved into your home; we will always discuss this with you.

External areas

- Any external areas will be cleared and any paving leading to front and rear door access will be free of trip hazards.
- Overgrown green spaces will be trimmed to a manageable level. This will then become your responsibility when you move in.
- Where you have a back garden and we are responsible, we will provide a secure chain link fence for the boundary of the garden for which we are legally responsible. Where a rear fence backs onto open land/footpaths or where a home is end of terrace we will install fence panels for privacy. You are responsible for the fencing to the front of your home.
- The external fabric (the structure of the building) will be safe and watertight.
- The roof will be safe, secure, free of leaks, wind and watertight.
- Brickwork, pointing and render will be clear of graffiti; there will be no major cracks, and it will be wind and watertight.
- Drains, gutters, down pipes and overflows will be safe and secure. They will be free from blockages, weed growth and leaks.
- Windows and glazing will be safe and secure, wind and watertight, and open and close freely. Locks will be in good working order and restrictors fitted to all opening windows on the first floor and above.
- Doors will be secure, wind and watertight and able to move freely. Locks will be in good working order. You will be provided with at least two sets of keys for external doors.
- Garages, sheds and outbuildings will be clear of rubbish, safe, lockable, secure, wind and watertight. Sheds and greenhouses will be your responsibility to maintain. Locks and keys are your responsibility.
- Air vents servicing your home will be clean and operational.

Internal areas

- All rooms will have adequate ventilation.
- All properties will be cleaned ready for you.
- Lofts will be clear and insulation provided to a minimum of 270mm.

Walls and decoration

- Walls and ceilings will be structurally sound, free from condensation, mould, graffiti, large cracks, loose plaster, bulges and holes.
- *Temporary, sheltered and retirement living tenancies* - settle will remove any graffiti from walls. We will decorate walls and ceilings where the current decoration is in poor condition.

- *Assured tenancies* - settle will remove any graffiti from walls. Decoration (including painting and decoration) is the responsibility of the incoming tenant, which will include any stripping of existing wallpaper and minor filling of wall cracks.
- If you are not able to decorate your home, please see the final section of this document for ways that we might be able to provide additional support.

Kitchen

- Kitchens will meet the government's Decent Homes Standard.
- As a minimum, there will be at least one base unit, a sink base unit and one wall unit. Kitchen drawers will be useable and able to close without catching. More units might be provided, depending on the size of the kitchen.
- Taps will be clean and easy to operate, drip free and clearly marked for hot and cold water.
- The sink will be clean with attached plug and chain.
- Worktops will be provided. The size will depend on the overall kitchen size. A minimum of three rows of tiles will be provided above work surfaces and the sink. All areas around the worktop will be sealed and clean. Tiles will be secure, clean and crack-free.
- Cooker: space will be provided for a cooker with a power point supplied. It is the tenant's responsibility to provide a standalone cooker. The space will be ready for you to install the cooker. If there is a gas supply to your home, the gas supply will be capped off with bayonet fittings.
- Washing machine: where there is sufficient room for a washing machine, we will leave a 620mm space with a cold and hot water supply, with a waste pipe ready for you to fit your washing machine. The hot and cold-water supply will be fitted with labelled hot and cold valves.
- Stopcocks will be easy to use and we will show you where they are.

Bathroom

- Bathrooms will meet the government's Decent Homes Standard.
- We will provide a bath or shower, hand basin and a flushing toilet.
- Baths will be clean and sealed to meet tiling/screens. Baths will be free from major chips. Bath panels, plugs and chains will be provided.
- Where tiling is present, it will be intact, without cracks with three rows of tiles above the sink and bath.
- Taps will be clean and easy to operate, drip free and clearly marked for hot and cold water.
- Wash hand basins will be clean with attached plug and chain.
- Toilets will be secure, clean and easy to flush. Toilet seats will be replaced if required.

Flooring

- Your new home will be let with vinyl flooring or similar in the kitchen, bathroom and toilet (if the toilet is separate to the bathroom). Vinyl flooring provided will be intact, clean, secure, level and free of trip or slip hazards.
- Where possible and in good condition, we will clean and retain existing carpets in the other rooms of your home. We cannot guarantee that floor coverings will be present in every room other than the kitchen, bathroom and toilet. If floor coverings aren't present in other rooms and you cannot afford to update them, please see the final section of this document for ways that we might be able to help with this.
- Where existing floor coverings can't be retained, any gripper rods will be removed from floors and staircases prior to letting the home.

- Anti-vibration mats will be fitted to washing machine spaces in flats, where there is sufficient space for a washing machine.

Stairs

- Handrails, steps, vertical posts and balustrades will be secure. Painting is your responsibility.

Non-standard fittings

- Alterations carried out by previous tenants that do not meet settle standards will be removed. This will be discussed with you if required during the viewing stage.

Offering extra support

We want you to be able to live comfortably in your new home. We know that moving into a new home involves added expenses and you may have difficulty getting all of the things you need to get yourself set up. If you are struggling to decorate or furnish your home, get appliances or cover the cost of flooring, please let us know. We might be able to refer you to local support services and/or offer support through our settle comfort fund.

If you feel you need extra support, please complete the online application form:

www.settlegroup.org.uk/support-from-settle/the-settle-comfort-fund-application-form/ or call us on 0330 343 0016.