

Making changes to your home

If you are a tenant living in one of our rented homes, you may be allowed to make some changes or improvements to your home.

This guide tells you:

- what changes you can make without getting our permission
- what changes you can make once you have got our permission, and
- what changes you must never make to the property.

It also tells you how to go about getting our permission if you need it.

If you are a homeowner, your lease will explain the type of changes you can make, either with or without our permission. For more information, please contact us.

What changes can I make without getting your permission?

There are some simple changes that you do not need our permission to make. These include:

- painting and decorating the inside of your home
- installing TV aerials and connections (although this must be done by a qualified engineer)
- replacing taps (although this must be done by a qualified plumber)
- fitting battery-powered smoke or heat detectors
- fitting wardrobes, cupboards or shelves.

There are other changes you can make to your home without our permission, as long as you agree to put your home back at the end of your tenancy to the way it was. These include:

- fitting an electric or gas cooker, built-in hob or oven without changing the original kitchen layout. This must be done by a qualified electrician or Gas Safe-registered engineer. You are then responsible for maintaining the appliance. If you leave your home, you must remove the appliance and, if it is a gas appliance, make sure its supply pipe is safely sealed
- replacing light fittings that do not need changes to the electrical wiring circuits. This must be done by a qualified electrician
- adding kitchen units or worktops without damaging or altering the original fittings
- replacing any inside doors, apart from fire safety doors

- fitting laminate flooring or any other floor finishes. You may only do this if you live in a house or maisonette, or a ground floor flat, and you must never fit laminate flooring in bathrooms or kitchens
- installing garden ponds. You may only do this if you live in a house or bungalow
- fitting garden sheds, pergolas or other structures that do not need concrete or masonry work. You may only do this if you have a fully-enclosed garden
- fitting extra locks, burglar alarms or other security systems
- fitting extra outdoor lighting
- fixing cat or dog flaps to outside doors. You may only do this if you live in a house and have a fully-enclosed garden
- adding non-gas heating or cooling systems, such as air-conditioning units.

If you leave your home without putting it back the way it was – for example, by not removing appliances you have fitted – we may charge you what it costs us to do it ourselves. We will check your property before the end of your tenancy.

Important: any changes you make without our permission are your responsibility. We will not repair or service these alterations. You must keep any changes you make in a good condition.

What changes do I have to ask your permission for before I can make them?

You must ask our permission before you make any changes to your home that could possibly:

- damage the property
- increase our maintenance costs, or
- affect other customers.

These include:

- fitting new gas appliances – you must never alter or remove an existing gas or electric system. Also, we will not give you permission to install ‘open-flue’ gas appliances (for example, a gas fire that needs a chimney)
- fitting showers – if we give you permission, you will need to fit extra tiling and other protection against water damage
- replacing bathrooms
- replacing kitchens
- replacing outside doors and windows
- building porches, conservatories, extensions and loft conversions
- removing or altering the structure of walls, floors, roof or any other part of the building structure that would need planning permission
- any changes that involve concrete or masonry work, apart from outside paving slabs. If you put down paving slabs, please take care not to create a tripping hazard any changes to create extra car-parking spaces. We will not give you our permission for an extra car-parking space in front of your house unless you have a ‘vehicular crossover’ in place. This is a ‘dropped kerb’ that allows you to drive onto your property safely and easily when you are using a car or another domestic vehicle. You must also get written permission from your local Highway Authority before starting work
- planting or fitting fencing or other structures more than one metre high in gardens that are not fully-enclosed, such as front and street-facing gardens

- planting any trees or shrubs that will grow to more than three metres high. You may only do this if you have a fully-enclosed garden cutting down any trees and shrubs more than three metres high. Some trees may be protected by a Tree Preservation order and you may need permission from your local council to remove them

To carry out the following changes to meet the needs of a physically-disabled person living in your home, you will need a 'specification' from your local council's Social Services Team, which is also known as an Occupational Therapist's Report:

- extending your house
- fitting ramps or level-access showers and making other changes to your flat or house. Level-access shower rooms will not be allowed in flats above ground floor level where there is no shared lift
- dividing rooms
- converting garages into living spaces
- changing windows into doors.

If we give you permission to make any changes, we will arrange for a surveyor to visit while the work is being done, and after it is finished. We will charge you our costs for doing this. You will not have to remove these alterations when you leave the property.

We will be responsible for repairing or servicing adaptations specified by your local council's Social Services Team once the warranty expires. You will be responsible for maintaining all other alterations made to your home.

There are other changes that you have to get our permission for first. These are ones that you agree to remove at the end of your tenancy, and to put your home back to the way it was before. This is so the changes you make do not inconvenience future tenants. These include installing stair lifts and hoists or making other alterations to your flat or house to meet the needs of a disabled person living there. (You must get the work done by a qualified professional.)

If we give you permission to make any of these changes, you will be responsible for repairing or servicing them once you have made them.

What changes can I never make to my home?

There are some changes that you must never make to your home. These include:

- making any changes that affect shared areas of estates, such as to shared doors and windows, TV or satellite aerials, and outdoor shared areas
- any changes where there is a risk of disturbing asbestos
- converting garages into living spaces, unless specified by your local council's Social Services Team
- changing windows into doors, or doors into windows, unless specified by your local council's Social Services Team
- fitting hobs or ovens into existing kitchen units or worktops when there are already cooker locations and these are not being used
- changes to electrical circuits inside a home, unless this is part of an approved extension or conversion
- fencing-off outside areas that are not fully-enclosed
- installing wood-burning fires or stoves, solar panels, or ground source heating, in the home.

If you make any of these changes, you will be breaking your tenancy agreement. We will charge you what it costs us to put your home back to the way it was.

How do I ask for permission to make a change or improvement to my home?

If you would like to make changes or improvements, and you need our permission first, please fill in the application form on the last page of this guide and send it back to us. Give us as much information as you can about the change or improvement you would like to make.

Once we get your application, we will tell you within one month whether we give you our permission. If we do not give our permission, we will explain our reasons.

Important: If you need our permission first, and you do not have it, you will be breaking your tenancy agreement if you go ahead with any changes.

Who will pay for the changes?

You will be responsible for paying the whole cost of any work done. You will also be responsible for paying for any damage caused to other people's property while the work is being carried out.

Will I get any compensation for any changes I make?

We may offer you compensation at the end of your tenancy for certain changes you make to your home. If we do, it will be because we think the improvement will benefit the next tenant. This will only happen for some changes, and we must have given you our written permission before you carried out the work.

We will tell you whether you will get compensation when we give you our permission. If this is the case, we will ask you to leave the improvements in place when you move out.

The amount we may pay you will not be the full amount you paid to the contractor, and will depend on the condition of the improvement when you move out of your home. We will also take account of any money you owe us when we work out how much compensation we will pay you.

The largest amount of compensation we will pay for any improvement is £3,000. If you had any grants to help you with the cost of the work, we will take these off the amount we pay you. We will not pay compensation if we value the improvement at less than £50 when you leave your home.

If you plan to claim compensation for any change you have made, you need to write to us. You must include with your letter a copy of our written permission we sent you to carry out the change. The earliest you can do this is 28 days before the end of your tenancy, and the latest you can do this is 14 days after the end of your tenancy.

You need not have had the improvements done yourself. You can claim compensation for home improvements if you are:

- the tenant who made the improvement
- someone who became a joint tenant with the tenant who made the improvement
- a person who has taken over the tenancy following the death of the tenant who made the improvement (this is called 'succession')
- a person who would have been entitled to take over the tenancy following the death of the tenant who made the improvement
- a husband, wife, ex-husband or ex-wife who is living in the home following a relationship breakdown, and you have been 'assigned' the tenancy or had it transferred into your name by a court order.

If the tenant who made the improvement has died and there is a will, its executors can also claim compensation for any improvements made to the property. (Executors are people responsible for carrying out the terms of a will.)

What will happen if I don't remove any changes I make when I leave my home?

If you leave your home without putting right any changes you have made, and we have asked you to do this, we will charge you what it costs to put your home back to the way it was. We will check your property before the end of your tenancy.

What happens next?

If we give you permission to make changes to your home, you will then be able to arrange for the work to be carried out. When choosing a contractor, please make sure they:

- are properly qualified for the job
- are a member of a professional trade organisation
- have a 'Public Liability' insurance policy, and
- give you a guarantee for the work they have done.

When the work is being carried out, you must make sure that:

- all shared areas of the building are protected and kept clear
- you tell all the neighbours who are likely to be affected by the work, and do everything you can to make as little noise, inconvenience and nuisance to others as possible
- you tell your neighbours about any disruption to services, such as water or gas, and get their agreement before this happens
- work is only carried out between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday, and between 9am and 12 midday on Saturday. If you need to have work done at any other times your neighbours must agree to this first. You may only arrange noisy work which may disturb other people between these hours
- you report to us any damage caused during the work and pay for it to be put right. You must pay for any damage caused to other people's property
- all shared areas are cleaned and free from dust once the work is finished.

You must tell us when the work is finished so we can arrange for a surveyor to inspect the changes.

Contact us

Online: www.a2dominion.co.uk/customers

By email: customer.services@a2dominion.co.uk

By phone: 0800 432 0077 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5:30pm)

In person or by post: by visiting or writing to one of our main or local offices.

My Account

View your rent and service charge statement, update your contact details and track your repair online at www.a2dominion.co.uk/myaccount.

Translations

We'll consider requests for translations into other languages and formats including large print, audio and Braille.

Making changes to your home: application form



Please complete this form, save it and send it to customer.services@a2dominion.co.uk.
If you prefer, you can send your completed form by post to A2Dominion Group,
113 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, London, W5 5TL.

First name

Last name

Address

Postcode

Phone number

Email address

Confirm email

Please describe the change (or changes) you would like to make to your home.

You can include drawings or maps on a separate sheet if you need them to explain the changes.

Cost of works

£

Name and address of contractor carrying out the works

Are you going to get a guarantee after the work is done?

Yes

No

Do you need planning permission or building control approval?

If 'yes', have you got the permission or approval you need?

I confirm that the information I have provided is correct, and that I agree to the terms and conditions in the 'Making changes to your home' guide.

Signature

Date