

# checking your building

For Home Owners and the Private Rented Sector

HOUSING STRATEGY & SERVICES  
SOCIAL WORK



# CHECKING YOUR BUILDING

Your building should be checked by a professional every five years to make sure it is in a good state of repair.

There are also some simple checks that you can do yourself. Before you start you should draw a sketch of the building so you can mark on any problems. You will also need some equipment - a camera, torch, binoculars, long measuring tape, a ladder and someone to help. The drawing, at the back, may be helpful to identify the different parts of the building which you are checking. If you live in a block of flats you will need to ask neighbours if you can have access to their properties.

**STAY SAFE** - don't take any risks. If you're not sure if it is safe to do something, don't do it. If you are using a ladder or other equipment make sure you know how to do it safely. Work round the building using the checklist and the drawing provided.

# INSIDE THE BUILDING

Start in the roof space. Moving down floor by floor and room by room, paying attention to any 'hidden' spaces on the way. Mark any problems on your sketch and try to find the cause by looking at the outside of the building. Photos may be useful too.

## ROOFSPACE

**You should only go into the roof space if it is safe to do so.**

- Joists, rafters, joins between roofs and walls and other visible surfaces: check for signs of rot, damp or water damage. Poke a knife into any timber beams or floorboards. If the wood is soft there may be an outbreak of wet rot
- Record the condition of woodwork everywhere, and record any fungal or insect infestation you find
- Water tank: is it insulated, are pipes well lagged to prevent frost damage? Does it have a cover on the top? Are there any lead pipes which have to be replaced?
- Check all pipework for leaks
- Insulation: the recommended depth of insulation is 270mm. Be careful some types of insulation are hazardous to health

## TOP FLOOR ROOMS

You should check the ceiling for signs of water coming from a damaged roof, for example stains or mould.

Check for signs of water coming in, for example stains or mould on the wall. Record the condition of any windows and whether they function. If timber, assess the condition of the woodwork and paintwork.

## ROOMS AT GROUND LEVEL OR BELOW

Again check for signs of water coming in. Look for stains or mould on the wall particularly at low level and around openings.

## COMMON STAIRS AND PASSAGES

### **Check for:**

- increasing cracks, for example between stair treads
- treads which are uneven or worn away
- loose or missing balusters or rails
- loose plasterwork – record the condition of the paintwork
- broken or inadequate locks on main doors
- broken or rotten stair windows
- hollow sounding ground floor

**Start at the roof and work downwards. Use binoculars to pick up detail at high level.**

# OUTSIDE THE BUILDING

## ROOF

You should not go on the roof - this is a job for a professional – however you may be able to do some examination, from the ground using binoculars or from another high building, for example a neighbour across the road.

Refer to the drawing, at the back, for the areas you should be looking at. Pay special attention to any areas above water damage you have identified from your internal survey.

## WALLS AND CHIMNEYS

Look for cracks, areas of decayed stone, gaps in the pointing (joints between bricks or stones), bulging or leaning walls.

## PAINTWORK

Check for any bare wood on windows or doors. Check the mastic (sealant between the window frame and the wall) for signs of wear.

## GUTTERS, DOWNPIPES

Check for rust, cracks, leaks and loose fixings. Check they are clear from blockages, for example vegetation.

Is there anything which could cause a trip, or fall, are railings or walls in good condition?

## DRAINS AND GRATINGS

Are they clear of sticks, stones and leaves? Does water flow away quickly?

## AIR VENTS (at ground level)

These should be clear of the ground and covered with a grating to stop vermin getting in. Clear any debris.

## TREES

Are there any trees next to the building which could hit telephone or power lines or damage the building.

## AFTER THE INSPECTION

If you find problems you should take action to stop them getting worse. The leaflet **Organising Repairs to your Building** gives useful information on how to go about it. The Council's Private Sector Housing Grants Team may also be able to assist – the leaflet **Scheme of Assistance** details how they can help.

# INSPECTION CHECKLIST

<b>Inside</b>	top floor rooms
	rooms with an outside wall
	rooms at ground level or below
<b>Roof Space</b>	joints between walls and roof
	joists, rafters, other timber
	other visible surfaces
	insulation
	water tanks and pipes
<b>Roof</b>	gutters and downpipes
	flashings
	chimneys
	roof coverings
<b>External walls</b>	cills
	lintols above windows and doors
	stonework
	pointing
	render coatings
	bulges/leaning walls
<b>Common stairs and passages</b>	door and windows
	rails and balusters
	loose plasterwork
	cracks between stair treads
	treads uneven or worn away
	windows and doors
<b>Outside the building</b>	floors
	paths
	railings and boundary walls
	drains and gratings
	air vents
trees	

# CHECKING YOUR BUILDING

## EXTERNAL WALLS

### LINTOLS

Look for: cracks or decay in stonework above doors or windows.

### CILLS

Look for: cracks or decay in stonework below windows.

### STONEMWORK

Look for: loose stonework, cracks, bulging, flaking or decaying stonework.

### POINTING

Look for: gaps or crumbling joints in the stonework.

### BULGES/LEANING WALLS

Look for: areas where the external wall protrudes, bulges out or leans - this can indicate structural problems.

## AROUND THE BUILDING

### TREES

Look for: trees which could damage the building or telephone or power lines.

### AIR VENTS

Should be clear of the ground and covered to stop vermin getting in or debris collecting.

### RAILINGS AND BOUNDARY WALLS

Check they are in good condition

### PATHS

Check for trips

### DRAINS AND GRATINGS

Check for any blockages and remove any debris.



## ROOF CHIMNEYS

Look for: cracks, missing or decayed stone or render, gaps in pointing, bulging or leaning sides, loose chimney pots.

## FLASHINGS

Look for: cracked or missing sections of flashings along chimney bases, walls of adjoining properties and the apex of the roof.

## ROOF COVERINGS

Look for: damaged or missing tiles or slates or blisters or cracks on felt roofing.

## GUTTERS & DOWNPIPES

Look for: rust, cracks, missing sections or loose fixings. Leaks may be indicated by damp patches on walls. Blockages in the gutter may be indicated by vegetation growth.

## ROOF SPACE

### JOISTS, RAFTERS, JOINTS BETWEEN ROOFS AND OTHER VISIBLE SURFACES

Look for: signs of water damage eg water staining, damp patches, stains, moulds or rotted timber; also check for insect attack.

## WATER TANK

Tank and pipe should be insulated to prevent freezing. Water tanks should also be covered. Check for lead pipes.

## INSULATION

Recommended depth is 270mm

## INSIDE

### TOP FLOOR ROOMS

Check the walls and ceilings for signs of water damage eg damp patches stains or mould caused by damage to the roof.

### COMMON STAIR AND PASSAGES

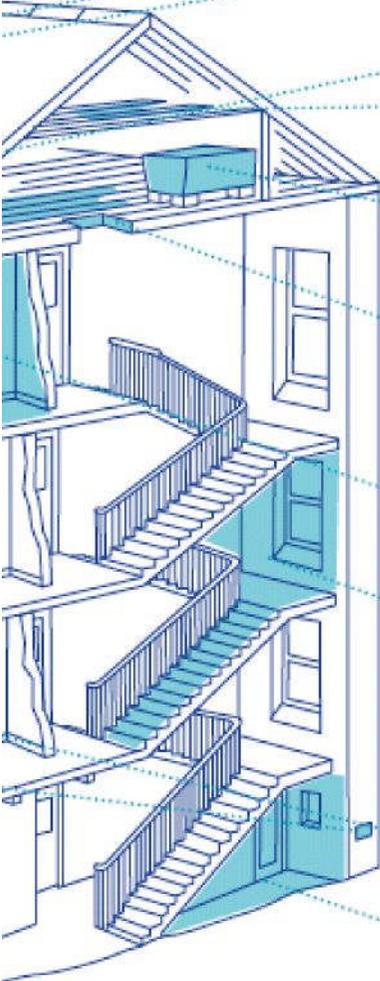
Look for: cracks developing between stair treads and uneven or excessive wear; loose or missing balusters or rails; cracked or loose plasterwork; broken or inadequate locks on main doors; broken or rotten stair windows.

### ROOMS WITH AN OUTSIDE WALL

Check the walls for damp patches, stains or mould, possibly caused by damage to the external stonework or pointing or defective downpipes.

### ROOMS AT GROUND FLOOR OR BELOW

Check the walls for damp patches, stains or moulds, particularly at low level. Potentially caused by damage to the stonework or pointing or by rising damp.



# FURTHER INFORMATION

## PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING TEAM

For advice on improving, repairing and maintaining your building.

Galashiels Area Office | Paton Street | Galashiels | TD1 3AS

tel: 01896 661393

[email: housingenquiries@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:housingenquiries@scotborders.gov.uk)

## BORDERS CARE & REPAIR

For advice and help on disabled adaptations and for older people on all aspects of repairing and maintaining your home.

The Weaving Shed | Etrick Mill | Dunsdale Road | SELKIRK  
TD7 5EB.

tel: 01750 724895

[email: enquiries@borderscareandrepair.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@borderscareandrepair.org.uk)

## Acknowledgement

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# NOTES

You can get this document on tape, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

#### HOUSING STRATEGY TEAM

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