

How to get the most from your new **VIVID** home



A handy **maintenance guide** to help you
get settled into **your new home**

Welcome

Now you are living in your new VIVID home there are lots of things you need to know to care for it.



Please note, rental properties are maintained by VIVID throughout the length of the tenancy, whereas with Shared Ownership, properties are VIVID's responsibility for the first 12 months. After this period you will be required to maintain your property.

Drying out your new home

In the first few months, it's especially important that your home is allowed to 'settle' – this includes allowing it to dry out gently.

During this period, you may notice minor cracks in walls, gaps in joinery and white deposits on the walls – all are completely normal in a new home. You can reduce the chance of this happening by following the steps outlined in this section.



Drying out and minimising cracks

Small cracks in the walls and gaps in joinery are both common signs of shrinkage, this happens when timbers and other materials contract as they dry out. It's extremely unlikely that these cracks are anything structurally significant, and they can normally be put right very easily with ordinary filler and a simple lick of paint during routine redecoration. Although try to avoid decorating in the first year to allow the plasterwork to dry out fully.

To keep cracks and gaps to a minimum, you need to allow all the materials used in constructing your home to dry out gradually.

Shrinkage is accelerated by heat. Try to keep an even temperature throughout your home and, if you move during the winter months, don't be tempted to turn the central heating up to its highest setting. Instead, use it sparingly so that the structure of your home warms up and dries out gradually.

Leaving your windows open for as long as possible each day (or at least the slotted vents within their frames - even in the winter when your heating is on) will help to ventilate your home and allow moisture to evaporate more naturally.

If you can, try to avoid drying clothes in the house and on radiators where possible, as the moisture is absorbed into the walls and can cause damp and mould.

The length of time your house takes to dry out depends on how it was built and what sort of weather conditions there are when you first move in. Generally speaking, it will take around nine months to a year. [More information >](#)

Efflorescence

Efflorescence is the appearance of white deposits on the bricks of a new home.

Just another part of the drying out process, the white powder is actually natural salts coming to the surface. These salts are not harmful and will eventually disappear over time. If they appear on internal walls, they can be gently brushed or wiped away. However, if the white deposits continue to appear on internal walls, it could indicate something more serious, such as a water leak. If that's the case, please contact us.



PRODUCE LESS MOISTURE

You should keep the doors closed when cooking and instead use the extractor fans/cooker hood



You should keep the ventilation system switched on when showering, if your home has this fitted



You should put washing outside to dry as much as possible and if you use a tumble dryer ensure that it is vented to the outside (unless this is not required if it is self-condensing)



You should cover pans to reduce steam when cooking



You should move kettles and toasters slightly away from under cupboards when using them. This will help with any steam damage



Please leave a gap between your furniture and the walls whilst the walls are drying out



Condensation

Condensation can cause problems to your new home if not dealt with properly. Ventilation is essential, especially in a new home, as the materials are still drying out from the construction process. You might notice condensation on surfaces like windows, floors and walls once you begin living in and heating your new VIVID home, this is completely normal.

To help prevent condensation, damp and mould, try to avoid 'cold spots' by having some heating on in all of your rooms.

To help minimise condensation please see our useful tips below and refer to the helpful video on our website. [Visit website >](#)

Plumbing and Heating

Here's our quick guide to the services in your new home — including your electrics, water supply, radiators and drains.

Heating your new home

Getting to know your heating and hot water system will help you use it more effectively.

- Identify your heating and hot water system's components and controls, and make sure you know how to use them. We recommend reading the instructions provided before you use it the first time, if you get really stuck then please contact us
- Most systems have a programmer which allows you to set the time your heating and hot water to come on
- Some rooms may have their own thermostat to control the overall temperature of that particular room independently from the temperature of the rest of your home

How to get the best out of storage heaters and electric hot water cylinders

Storage heaters are designed to heat up during the night when electricity tends to be cheaper, depending on your supplier, and then releases the heat gradually during the day. Here are a few helpful tips to help you get the best out of your storage heaters:

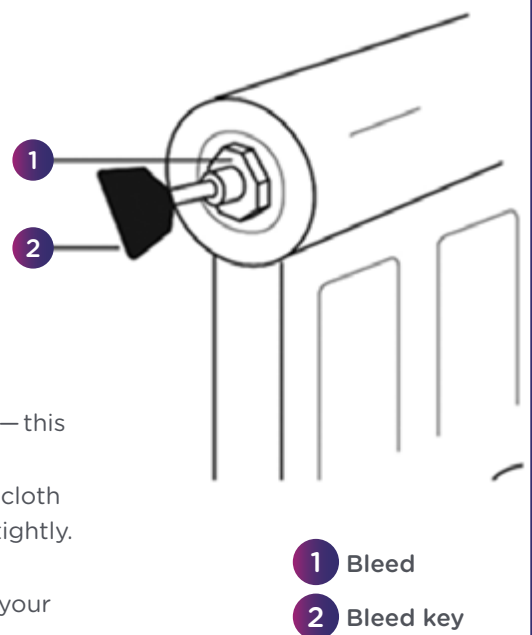
- Keeping the grills on your storage heaters closed at night will save as much heat as possible
- When you want to release more heat, simply open the grills and adjust them to suit your needs
- If you have an electric hot water cylinder, it is best to use the overnight electricity to heat your water
- Using your immersion switch will give you extra hot water, be aware though that this uses more electricity so could increase your electricity bills if used regularly

Radiators

If part of your radiator is cold, this may be because air is trapped. Bleeding the radiator will release this air and allow hot water to fill the radiator and increase the heat it can radiate into the room. Before you bleed the radiators, always ensure that the central heating is switched off and the radiators are cool.

How do I bleed a radiator?

- Put a bleed key over the bleed valve (see diagram), holding a cloth underneath to catch any water
- Turn the key anti-clockwise until you hear a hissing noise — this is the air being released
- When the hissing stops and water starts to drip onto the cloth you're holding, turn the key clockwise to close the valve tightly. Never unscrew the valve completely
- If you bleed your radiator you may need to re-pressurise your boiler - check the boiler instructions for how to do this



Drains

Blocked drains can easily be avoided by taking a few preventative measures.

Avoid putting anything into the drainage system via the sink or toilet, that could cause a blockage, for example oil, fat, nappies and baby wipes. VIVID is not responsible for unblocking drains unless there has been a construction fault. The most common causes of blocked drains are listed below.

To help with any blockages that may occur please refer to the helpful video on our website.

[Visit website >](#)



10 THINGS YOU SHOULD NEVER PUT DOWN THE DRAIN

Baby products and cleaning wipes

Products such as nappies, baby wipes, cleaning/toilet wipes and make-up removal wipes are not biodegradable so should not be placed down the drain or toilet.

Grease/Fat

All kinds of fat and grease can clog your drains and produce nasty smells.

Oils

Cooking oil, engine oil, salad dressing or brake fluid, don't pour oils down your drain, dispose of them responsibly.

Condoms & feminine hygiene products

Never flush these down your toilet. These products are not biodegradable, so are harmful to both your drains and the environment.

Paint

Paint is toxic to the environment and must only ever be disposed of in a safe manner, either once it's dried or at a dedicated facility — never down your drain.

Food

Try to avoid letting leftovers from dinner from getting caught in the drain. If too many items build up over time there will be a smell.

Coffee grounds

Coffee beans and powders can block your drains so don't wash them down your drain.

Eggshells

Although small, shell fragments from peeling a boiled egg can clog your drain if not disposed of correctly.

Cotton buds

Never dispose of cotton buds down the drain or toilet. The plastic of cotton buds and the cotton itself can both be very detrimental to your drains and the environment.

Produce stickers

Remember to remove any produce stickers before you wash your fruit and veg in the sink, they can easily get caught on filters or clog your drain.



Electricity and Water

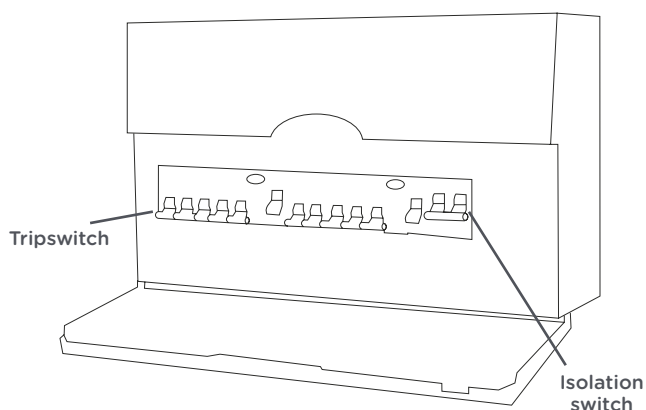
Consumer unit (fuse box)

We recommend you familiarise yourself with the locations of your fuse box and mains switch when you first move into your new home, so you're prepared if your electric supply goes off for any reason. It's also a good idea to keep a torch handy in case it's dark when this happens.

Your fuse board will either have fuses or tripswitches, whilst modern fuse boards are fitted with a circuit-breaker fuse system (mini-circuit breakers).

What should I do if my electric goes off?

- If there's a fault, a switch is tripped (see diagram a below) and the circuit is blown



- If you have a tripswitch, check if any switches on the fuse box have turned to the 'off' position, and reset them to 'on'
- If a fuse continues to trip or blow, this may be due to a faulty electrical appliance. To find out which appliance it might be we recommend unplugging all of your appliances from their sockets, then plugging in each appliance one at a time and switching it on. This way, if the fuse blows again you'll know you've found the faulty appliance. It's best to get this appliance checked by a qualified electrician, or recycle it if it's beyond repair

- If you can't find a tripped switch (or similar) in the fuse box, check with your neighbours to see if there's been a power cut
- If applicable, check your meter to make sure you're in credit

Water

It's a good idea to identify where your stopcock is located (it's usually where the water supply enters your home) and test it each year to make sure it works. You do this by turning it off and running the cold tap in the kitchen. The tap should stop running almost immediately. If it doesn't, report the problem to us.

Most taps and water supplies will also have isolation valves so that you can shut off the water supply to that appliance/tap only, while still being able to use water in the rest of the house. This is helpful when having to repair a dripping tap for example.

If there's a leak or burst pipe you should shut off the water supply to your home immediately and contact us.

Outside External Care

Lawns

To keep your grass looking its best, there are a few things you'll need to do. Here are some of our top tips:



- Try to keep off the lawn as much as possible for the first few weeks. If you don't, the lawn may become bumpy and uneven. If you have to go across the lawn to carry items, try to place some boards over the new turf to use as a walkway
- Keep the new lawn well-watered (normally daily but this does of course depend on the weather conditions), especially during the first few months. During hot spells, or periods of drought, water early in the morning or early evening where possible. This allows the water to get to the grass roots before the sun burns it off
- Whilst the lawn needs to be kept watered, you also need to encourage strong, deep roots. Overwatering makes the lawn lazy — it won't grow strong, deep roots because it doesn't have to. If the lawn is permanently waterlogged, the roots will be starved of oxygen and go yellow. In extreme cases, such as prolonged periods of wet weather, this results in the grass being killed
- Over the first three or four weeks you should see the lawn begin to establish — the lawn will start to knit together so that you don't notice the individual turves and the grass will start to grow. As the lawn knits together, water it less frequently. It's better to water thoroughly every two to three days than to water a little bit every day
- Don't be too hasty to mow the new lawn (although please don't wait until it becomes unmanageable). The blades of grass should be at least 25mm in height, and the lawn should look like it's knitting together well. Typically it will take around three weeks after laying, although it's weather dependent and can be less in spring and early summer
- The lawn will need to establish and settle before letting animals loose on it or installing any children's play equipment

Ongoing maintenance

Once your lawn has established you'll still need to maintain it. This could include:

- Raking it at least once a year to clear out any moss
- Spiking it with a fork to allow air to get to the roots
- Mowing regularly from spring until autumn
- Feeding it once or twice a year
- Dealing with any pest infestations or diseases
- Moving trampolines and other items regularly to ensure the grass underneath doesn't die

General

Extreme weather conditions

Care should be given to any outside taps (if fitted), particularly in very cold weather to avoid any damage. Turn off your isolator valve to the external tap in the winter months to avoid it freezing over in extreme weather conditions.

Should any issues arise as a result of extreme weather as a tenant you should be covered by VIVID. If you are a homeowner you'll need to check if you are covered under the NHBC warranty that comes as part of buying a new build home, and refer to your buildings insurance.

Holidays/Extended Periods of Non-Occupancy

Planning a holiday or going away for an extended period of time? If you know your home is going to be unoccupied for a long period of time, make sure you take the necessary precautions or make arrangements for a trusted family member or friend to check in on your home whilst you're away.

VIVID cannot be held responsible for any damage caused if the correct precautions are not taken during these periods.

If you're a new home owner, don't forget to check that your home insurance will cover you if you are going to be away from home for an extended period. If you rent your property, check your tenancy agreement for any advice on extended absence.

Wall fixings

We ask you not to fix anything to the walls during the first year, but should you choose to, please take extreme care when fixing items to walls as electric cables or radiator pipes may be inside the wall. Always use a cable detector and do not drill into walls near electrical outlets or switches. Try to use suitable fixings for the type of wall as most internal walls are constructed with plasterboard.

Ceiling fixings

We do not recommend that you fix anything to ceilings.

Redecoration

You should allow at least 12 months for the building to dry out before attempting any redecorating. This will save you time and money as any new paint you apply may be damaged during this time. Applying wallpaper in the first 12 months will also affect the drying out process.

Alterations

If we find that you have made alterations which have damaged the property, VIVID will not be responsible for any associated repairs that may be required.

Insuring your home

It makes sense to think about getting some insurance for your home as it is one of your most valuable possessions. It contains all your belongings and memories which are important to look after. We would suggest that it is always a good idea to consider taking out contents insurance to protect the belongings in your VIVID home.

We also know that despite the best protection measures that we put in place, there is still the risk of theft, damage and natural disasters occurring that we can never fully get away from. If you want to cover your home should any of these issues occur, you'll need home insurance.

For a range of helpful how to videos to help you look after your home [visit our website >](#)

