

Looking After Your New Home

When moving into any home, there is always lots to learn about how best to look after and maintain it. That's why we have put together these handy pointers to provide you with some useful tips and advice about how to 'run-in' and live in your new Qualis home, together with some more general information.

Depending on the type of home you live in, some of the areas covered may not be needed. For example, you may not have a driveway or garden, so just select what's helpful for you.

Your health and safety are always our priority. Certain types of maintenance or repair may require specialist knowledge and training. In such instances, these works should always be carried out by a competent, accredited trade professional. For other items, which you may feel equipped and able to carry out, always be sure to wear appropriate safety clothing for the job in hand.

In all instances, including where maintenance to fixed or freestanding appliances and equipment is deemed necessary, the manufacturer's maintenance and repair instructions take precedence over this document.



Please note, damage, negligence, improper use or failure to maintain any aspect of your new home, may affect your warranty.



Running in your new home

During the first few months your new home will need time to settle in.

This includes allowing the materials in your home to dry out naturally from the moisture absorbed during construction.

This period can vary in time depending on the type of construction, weather conditions during the build and also the season when you move in, but it usually takes between 6 months and 2 years.

Routine home maintenance

Some elements of your new home will require routine maintenance which is not included as part of your aftersales service. These could include items such as servicing of a central heating system, protecting garden fencing and painting external timbers. Whatever routine tasks need to be addressed, ensure that you are suitably competent to carry them out, or use qualified tradespeople.

Your new home is covered by our Qualis 2-year warranty so, if at any time you have any queries about routine maintenance, then please refer to our aftersales team who will be pleased to help.

Remember, we have specific instructions just for emergencies, so in the unlikely event one should arise please refer to the *What is an Emergency?* section on page 32 of this manual.

Settling cracks

Settling cracks are normal and occur in all new properties, some more visibly than others. As you live in and heat your new home, the construction materials slowly dry, which can cause them to contract. Small cracks are common, particularly in areas such as skirting and door/window frames, where two materials meet.

Normal settling cracks are nothing to worry about and are considered part of your home maintenance. They can be repaired easily with a filler/caulking compound followed by a coat of paint primer and a finish coat. **However, if you have any concerns, please contact our aftersales team.**

Efflorescence

Efflorescence deposits are common during the drying-out process. These white powdery deposits normally occur on external walls but can also be found internally.









They appear when salts within building materials come to the surface as moisture is released. These salts are not harmful and in time will usually disappear with normal weathering.



Condensation

As your home dries out, the additional moisture in the air may cause condensation to form on cold surfaces, such as windows and exterior walls.

By following our simple recommendations, you can help your home to dry out gradually and naturally:


-  Keep your home well ventilated.
-  If possible, dry washing outside.
-  If possible and safe to do so, leave windows and trickle vents (if applicable) open.
-  Try to keep the bathroom door closed during and after use.
-  Any mechanical ventilation systems should be kept on at all times and maintained in line with manufacturers' instructions.
-  Dry off any condensation that forms immediately.
-  When cooking, always use the extractor hood provided and if possible close the internal kitchen door.
-  During winter months, consider how you use your heating. Gradually warm up the structure to maintain a stable temperature and avoid overheating, which can accelerate shrinkage.

Electricity, gas, water, drainage and communication services

The maintenance of services provided to your home is generally the responsibility of the supply company up to:

 **Electricity –**
your consumer unit

 **Gas –**
your meter

 **Water, drainage and communications –**
the curtilage of your property



Maintenance of these services should only be carried out by competent and accredited persons.

It is important to familiarise yourself with the location of the mains electricity isolation switch, gas shut off valve (if applicable), water stopcock and any access chambers to ensure they are easily accessible in the event of an emergency.

Each electrical circuit is protected by a circuit breaker. In the event of a circuit breaker tripping, never attempt to override it before investigating.

Caution should always be taken when dealing with electricity. Always seek advice from a qualified tradesperson and ensure any works are carried out by a suitably trained, accredited professional.





Alarms

It's recommended that all smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms are tested regularly, on a weekly basis, to ensure they are working correctly. Batteries should also be changed routinely, even when mains-operated. An expiry date may be shown on the device to let you know when it needs replacing. If not, please refer to the manufacturer's guidelines. Clean regularly, following the manufacturer's instructions, to remove any accumulation of dust or debris which can prevent effective operation.

Fire extinguisher

It's advisable to have a general-purpose fire extinguisher available for use in the home. Keep in an easily accessible location, such as the kitchen. If not displayed, check the manufacturers' recommendations for servicing and the expiry date.

First-aid kit

It's also advisable to keep a first-aid kit and a book on first-aid procedures in an accessible location. Some contents will be subject to expiry dates.

Heating and hot water

There is limited maintenance that the new homeowner can carry out on their heating and hot water system. It's important to ensure regular maintenance and servicing of all the component parts by a competent, registered tradesperson, which will be a condition of your warranty.

Following the manufacturer's user manuals should ensure trouble-free operation and running.

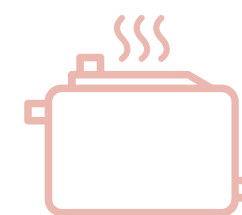
Keeping temperature controls on a reduced setting can help to reduce running costs and, with experience, the ideal operating temperature can be established.

Thermostat

In homes with a central heating system, the thermostat allows you to maintain a comfortable temperature throughout. Room temperatures may be further regulated by adjusting the individual thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs), if present.

Heating bills can be significantly reduced by lowering the thermostat by just 1 or 2 degrees.

Radiators

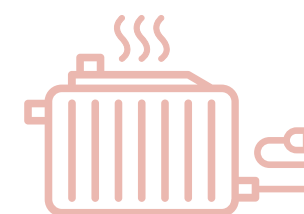


Wet radiator

To help maintain efficiency, regular dusting is recommended. If a section of the radiator feels cold, it's probably due to an airlock within the radiator. First, turn off the heating and ensure you allow enough time for the radiators to cool completely. When on, radiators contain hot water and air, which could cause scalding when released. Using a radiator bleed key, slowly open the bleed screw to allow trapped air to escape. When water starts to seep out re-tighten the screw, it's a good idea to have a cloth at hand to capture any excess water. To ensure your system is ready for the winter months and performing efficiently, during the autumn you may wish to bleed the radiators throughout your home.

If you notice a leak from one of your radiators, you should isolate it by closing both valves and opening the bleed valve to release the internal pressure; this should hopefully slow down the leak.

If your home is still within the 2-year warranty period, you can contact the Qualis Homes aftersales team for advice and, if required, to arrange for repairs. If outside of the warranty period, and you are unable to resolve, you can seek assistance from a qualified tradesperson.



Electrical radiator

Apart from regular light dusting, most electrical radiators don't require any annual servicing.

If a radiator feels cold to touch, first check its thermostatic settings. If these are correct, it may be an electrical issue, such as a blown fuse.

To maximise the performance of your radiators, when positioning furniture, try to leave space around them to allow the heat to circulate and always avoid covering.

Air-source heat pump

Air-source heat pumps are relatively low-maintenance appliances. It's important they are kept clean and that the airflow around them is not restricted. In some cases, the pump may be located within an enclosure which will be provided appropriate to its size.

Follow the manufacturer's user manual to ensure efficient operation. We recommend you familiarise yourself with the servicing requirements, as these can vary, and always use a competent registered engineer; failure to do so will affect your warranty.



Unvented hot water system

As this system uses a pressurised metal cylinder, you should never attempt to complete any works to it yourself. Follow the manufacturer's user manual to ensure efficient operation and for servicing advice. A routine service by a competent registered engineer is required and will be a condition of your warranty.



Mechanical ventilation and heat recovery system

Your MVHR system is designed to run continuously. This will ensure your home remains well ventilated, reducing condensation and nasty smells, and helping to maintain good air quality. The system is constantly passing air through its filters and valves. Over time these can become clogged, which reduces efficiency and performance of the system. Follow the manufacturer's guidance for how to clean grilles and air valves. Depending on the usage, the filters will also need to be cleaned or replaced.

A routine service, in line with manufacturers' recommendations, should be carried out by a suitably qualified engineer; failure to do so may affect your warranty.

Loft space

Be particularly careful when entering the loft space, walk only on the roof trusses. The ceiling of the room below is not designed to support additional weight.

Ensure all vents are kept clear of insulation materials or anything that may restrict airflow.

Storing belongings in the loft space is not recommended. Together with possible ventilation issues, this could cause structural damage.





Kitchen appliances/white goods

- ✓ All appliances should be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✓ Cleaning regularly, with suitable products, will help to keep your appliances working efficiently and looking as new.
- ✓ For dishwashers, ensure rinse aid and salt reservoirs are regularly topped up. As instructed by the manufacturer, routinely run a cleaning cycle using a specialist solution to increase the dishwasher performance and extend its service life.
- ✓ Fridges and freezers should be cleaned regularly and as required, defrosted in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Particular attention should be paid to door seals and to ensure fridge drain holes are kept free from debris. This will aid efficient operation and help to reduce running costs.

- ✓ Microwave ovens should be cleaned after each use using a sponge and mild detergent or appropriate surface cleaner.
- ✓ Washing machines and washer dryers should have filters cleaned and checked regularly. Use a limescale remover routinely and leave the door slightly open after use to allow the machine to dry out. As instructed by the manufacturer, routinely run the machine on a cleaning cycle using a specialist cleaner.
- ✓ Ovens, hobs and cooker hoods should be cleaned on a regular basis using appropriate cleaning products.
- ✓ Specialist cleaning solutions are available for glass stovetops. Never use abrasive products, as these may damage the surface.

If your home is fitted with an induction hob, always use compatible pans. Pacemakers can be affected by the electromagnetic field produced by these hobs. Before use, please check and follow the precautions advised.



Kitchens



Your kitchen worktops should be used and cleaned in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance. Failure to do so may result in damage or discolouration to the surface that will not be covered by your warranty.



In hard-water areas, a build-up of limescale may occur on taps and fittings. This should be removed using a proprietary cleaner. Never use abrasive products, as these may cause damage. If required, specialist solutions are available but always test on a small, inconspicuous area first, before use.



Wipe down cupboard doors using a proprietary cleaner or with warm soapy water.



When using any specialist cleaning products, you should always wear appropriate safety clothing.



If cupboard door hinges, catches or drawer runners become stiff to operate, a small amount of silicone lubricant will improve their operation. Always use a cloth to wipe away any excess. If needed, door hinges can be adjusted and tightened using a small screwdriver.



Bathrooms and toilet areas

For general maintenance of sanitaryware, brassware, tiling and grout, always use a cleaning product suitable for the surface and a non-abrasive sponge/microfibre cloth. To achieve the best finish and avoid water marks, dry the surface after cleaning and after general use.

If you live in an area with hard water, you may find that your fittings are affected by limescale which can be difficult to remove, particularly around taps and on shower screens. Never use abrasive solutions or cloths in an attempt to remove, as this may cause damage. Specialist solutions are available, but always test on a small, inconspicuous area before use.

Condensation within the bathroom and toilet areas can cause mould to form. To help prevent this, ensure rooms are adequately ventilated and the extractor system fitted is on and the airflow unrestricted.

Remove any mildew stains immediately using an appropriate removal agent, always following the usage and safety guidelines provided.

To help maintain your tiling and grout, it is recommended that you wipe down the area after use to remove the excess moisture.

Pay attention to the joints around shower trays and baths. Cracks or other damage could result in leaks or mould. Reapply an appropriate sealant as soon as possible when required.

Drains

Blocked drains and toilets are a common issue. You are responsible for the pipes and drains within your demise.

To avoid blockages do not put anything down sinks or toilets that could cause an obstruction including:

- ✗ Grease, fat and oil
- ✗ Food waste
- ✗ Baby/wet wipes – including those that are ‘flushable’
- ✗ Nappies/sanitary items
- ✗ Hair
- ✗ Any foreign objects

Please note your warranty covers system defects only. If the cause of a drainage issue is due to improper use or inappropriate waste removal, you may be charged.

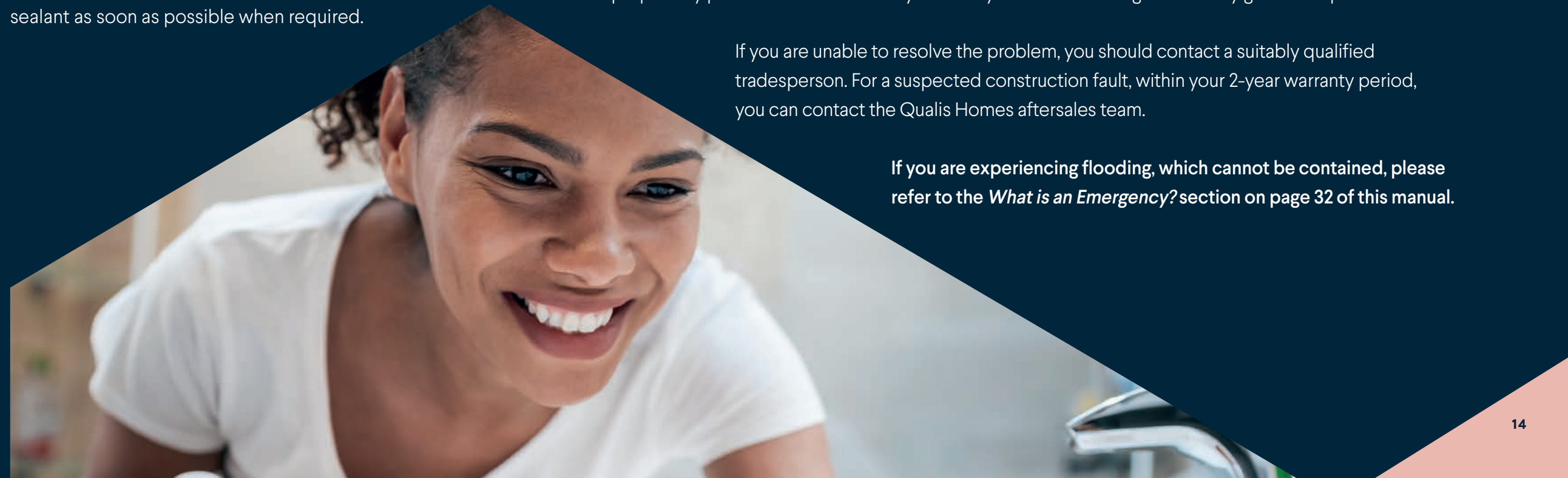
Using plug filters can help to prevent blockages by catching any dirt and debris before it enters the system.

To dispose of grease, fat and oil, either wipe up or pour into a container before placing in the bin.

If you notice that water is draining slower than normal and you suspect you may have a blockage, a simple plunger can be very effective to dislodge small blockages. If this is unsuccessful, there are a range of proprietary products available. Always ensure you follow the usage and safety guidelines provided.

If you are unable to resolve the problem, you should contact a suitably qualified tradesperson. For a suspected construction fault, within your 2-year warranty period, you can contact the Qualis Homes aftersales team.

If you are experiencing flooding, which cannot be contained, please refer to the *What is an Emergency?* section on page 32 of this manual.



Karndeans vinyl flooring

Karndeans is a hard-wearing, stain-resistant floor covering that is designed to be easy to look after and maintain.

- 1 A soft brush can be used to sweep away dust and debris. If you prefer to use a vacuum cleaner, always check that it is suitable for use on this surface.
- 2 Regularly mop with Karndeans Clean, or a similar product suitable for vinyl flooring, to keep it looking its best.
- 3 Ensure all excess water is removed from the mop, as too much water significantly increases drying times and can cause damage to the flooring, which will not be covered by your warranty.
- 4 Any spillage should be mopped up as soon as possible to avoid damage or staining.
- 5 Karndeans also offer their own treatment for your flooring, which can be used periodically, usually every 12-18 months depending on usage, to help restore the finish and protect the surface.
- 6 Always refer to the manufacturer's recommendations for cleaning solutions.

Hard flooring can be slippery when wet, so always ensure you take appropriate precautions.

Attaching furniture rests to the bottom of furniture legs distributes weight and can help to protect the surface. Care should always be taken when moving furniture etc, to avoid scratching.

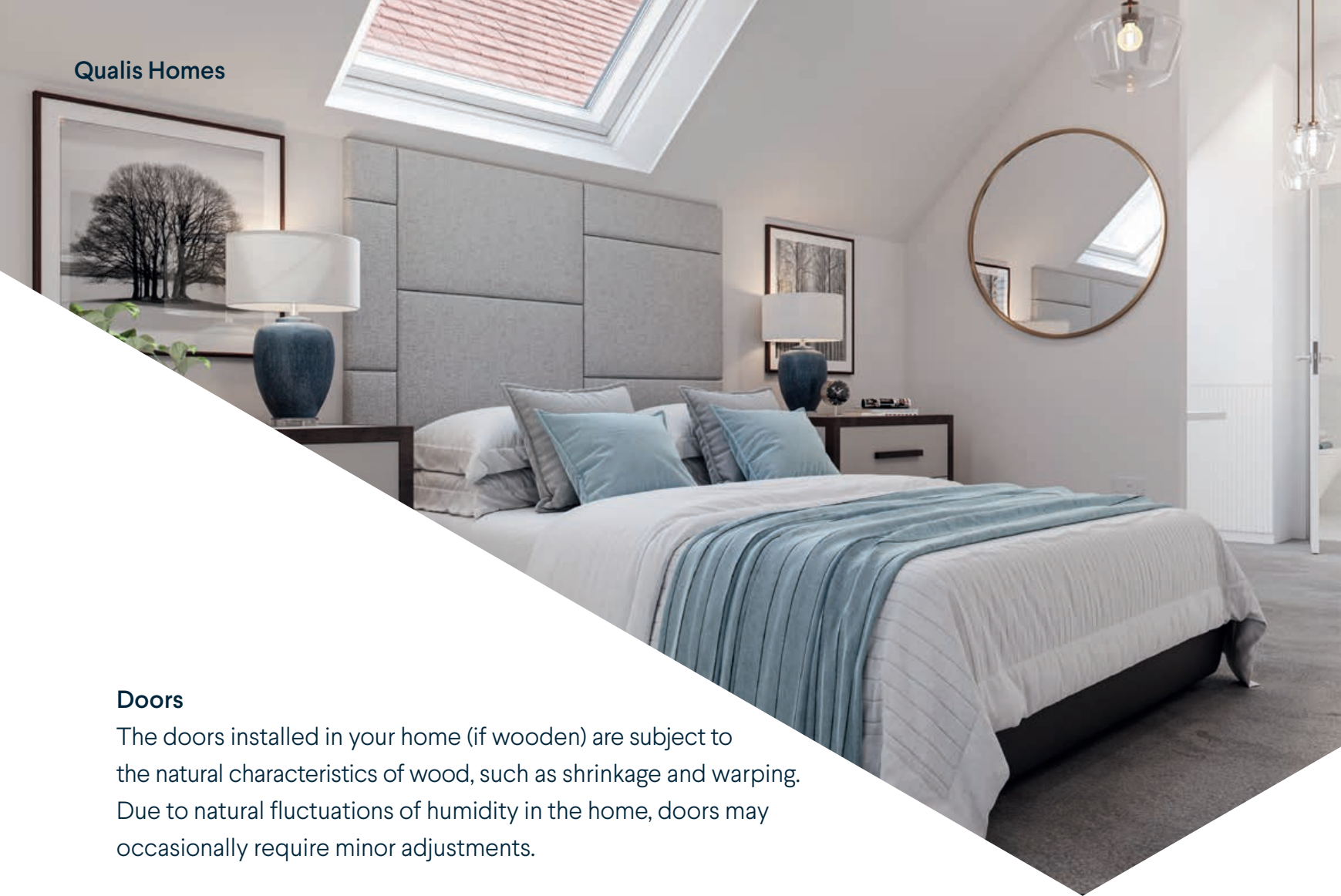


Carpet

Most carpeting offers built-in stain resistance which prevents spills and dirt from setting in the fibres. While most stain-resistant treatment is fairly effective, it's not a substitute for a prompt clean-up of household mishaps.

- Regular vacuuming and occasional cleaning, using a suitable carpet cleaning solution for tough stains or built-up dirt, should keep your carpets looking their best. Always test a small, inconspicuous area before use.
- Attaching furniture rests to the bottom of furniture legs distributes weight and can help to protect the carpet. Care should always be taken when moving furniture to avoid pulling.
- Shading is normal with all carpets. It is caused by the way the pile is sitting and how the light then reflects differently.
- Refer to the manufacturer's recommendations for additional information on the care of your floor coverings.

Although very unlikely, should we need to replace your flooring in any area, every endeavour will be made to provide a match. However, where this is not possible, we will only provide a replacement for the affected room.



Doors

The doors installed in your home (if wooden) are subject to the natural characteristics of wood, such as shrinkage and warping. Due to natural fluctuations of humidity in the home, doors may occasionally require minor adjustments.

'Sticking' can occur, particularly in new build properties. If you experience this issue during a damp season, do not sand or plane the door unless it continues to stick after the weather changes. Applying a suitable lubricant to the offending area can often reduce the effect. Only a small amount ought to be required and any excess should be wiped off immediately.

Through normal use, hinge screws can become loose, these can be tightened as necessary. Applying a silicone lubricant to hinges can cure squeaking, the use of oil is not recommended as this can attract dirt and dust. Use a cloth to wipe away any excess.

Minor separations to the door trim can normally be repaired using a suitable filler or caulking compound. This would be considered part of your general home maintenance. However, if you have any queries, and you are within your 2-year warranty, you can contact the Qualis Homes aftersales team.

These points may also apply to any wooden windows you have within your home.

Fire doors within your home, and also within communal corridors for apartments, should always be kept closed. This is the resident's responsibility. To ensure performance, these should remain as fitted, with no hooks, etc, added.

Plasterboard

Normal shrinkage in plasterboard can cause minor cracks and nail pops (raised nail heads) to appear. Popped nails should not affect the strength of the wall and can be re-seated using a suitable nail punch and hammer. Repair can be easily made using suitable filler pastes, sanding and repainting. This work is best done when you redecorate the room and is regarded as general home maintenance. However, if you have any queries, and you are within your 2-year warranty, you can contact the Qualis Homes aftersales team.

Interior decoration

Walls and ceilings can be painted to suit your own colour scheme. To allow your home to continue to dry out, we recommend water based paints. Where possible, consider delaying your redecoration to allow your home to settle in and do not hang wallpaper coverings for at least 12 months.

External woodwork and finishes

External finishes will dull over time. To extend the appearance, where appropriate, wash on a regular basis.

All external woodwork should be repainted or stained periodically to preserve the wood. This will probably first be required after 2 years, but you may need to do this sooner in exposed areas.

Attaching items to walls and ceilings

Before fixing shelving, curtain poles, lighting or any other items to the internal walls and ceilings, ensure that no electrical services or pipework are concealed behind the intended fixing area.

Wall and ceiling types vary throughout your home. The type of fitting should be considered as appropriate for the fixing area and item to be fixed. Particular attention should be taken for heavier items, to ensure the fixing area can accommodate the weight. If in doubt, seek advice from a qualified tradesperson.

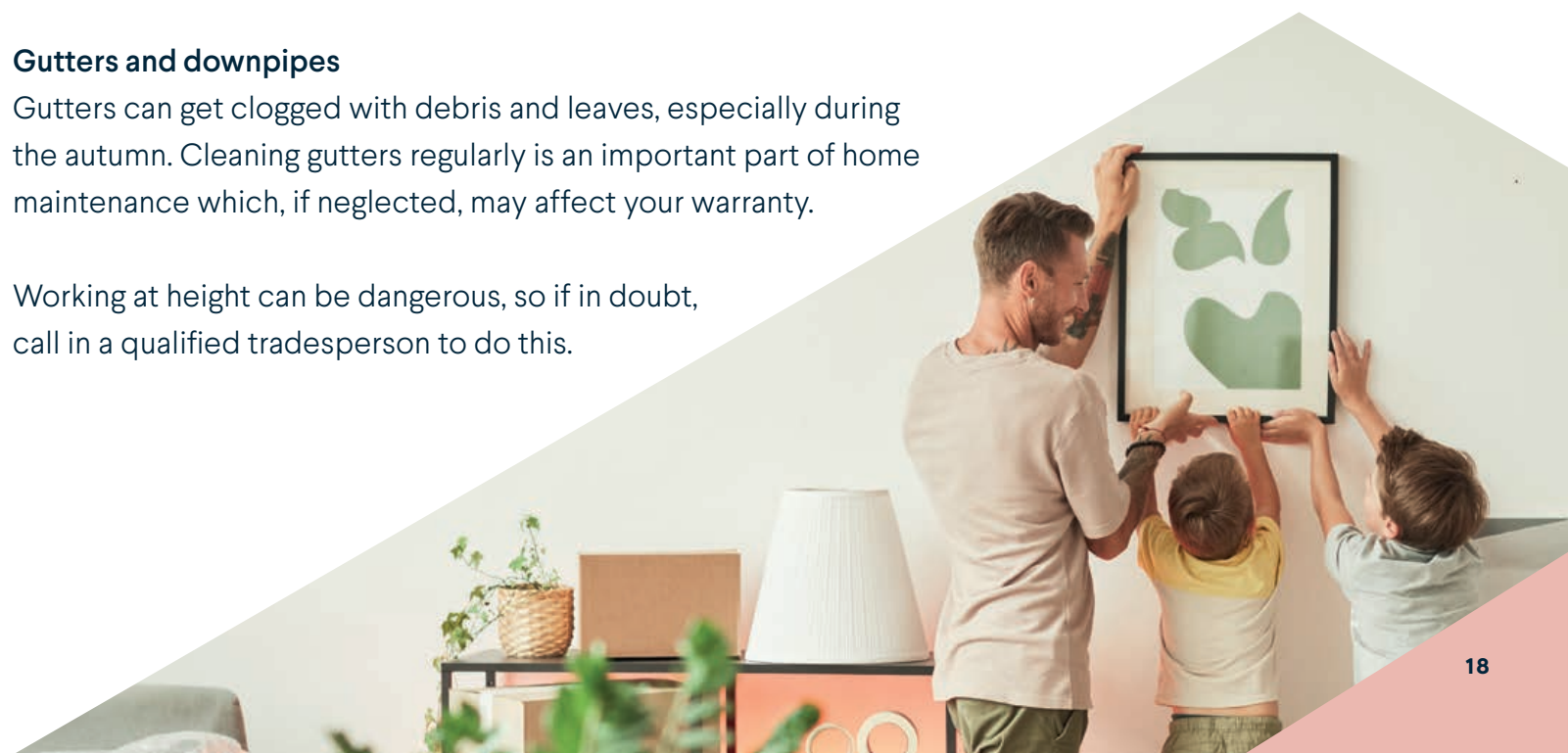
Roofs

Working at height can be dangerous and should be carried out by trained professionals using the correct equipment. Roof surfaces vary and can be easily damaged. Ensure any works in this area include a suitable access method.

Gutters and downpipes

Gutters can get clogged with debris and leaves, especially during the autumn. Cleaning gutters regularly is an important part of home maintenance which, if neglected, may affect your warranty.

Working at height can be dangerous, so if in doubt, call in a qualified tradesperson to do this.



Infestation

Wasps, mice and other pests can enter your home; this is not normally caused by a build defect. Please contact a professional pest control company for further advice.

Garden

Your new home may have a garden with grass. This needs care to allow it to bed in and become an established lawn.



Always try to stay off newly laid turf for at least 4–6 weeks, especially if it's been laid in wet conditions or in the winter.



If your lawn was laid in dry conditions, keep it well watered. Water the lawn in the morning or evening to avoid the grass drying out in the sun.



Wait until roots establish in the soil before mowing. New turf takes at least one season to settle properly. When you do mow it, set the blades on the highest setting to just snip off the top.



Additional lawn care may be necessary, including feeding and aerating. This should be done in accordance with established methods.

Shrubs and trees

It can take a few years for your new shrubs and trees to fully establish themselves. During this time it is important that they are regularly checked and watered.

Before planting any additional landscaping, you should always carefully consider the location. Root paths can become quite extensive and if not given sufficient space, could interfere with property foundations, external surfaces, drainage and other services. This is why it is important to establish a seasonal pruning plan, especially for larger trees and shrubs.

As the landscaping matures, you may wish to cut back any branches that overhang your property. As a considerate member of your new development community, please discuss your proposals with adjacent owners. Certain, usually mature, trees may be subject to planning restrictions. Please check with your local authority before carrying out any works.



Garden gates and fences

Wooden gates and fences should be regularly checked for any areas of concern which may require spot treatment.

A routine of cleaning and treating, using a specialist product, should be adopted to prolong the lifespan. The frequency of this will vary depending on the weather conditions, the type of wood and maintenance product used, but is generally annually/biannually. Always ensure you follow the product usage and safety guidelines provided.



Outside taps

Little maintenance is required for outside taps, except during the winter months, when frost is expected. If the tap is fitted with an internal service valve, turn it off and then open the outside tap to drain the water in the pipe. Close the tap and fit an insulated tap cover. Remember to re-open the service valve when you want to use the tap again.



Driveways and paths

The construction of your driveway (if included) has been designed for domestic use only and is not suitable for heavy vehicles. This includes removal vehicles.

Surface finishes may vary and can, over time, be affected by cracking due to constant exposure to the elements; sun, rain, frost, etc. Avoid wheel turning when stationary, as this can cause damage to the surface, particularly when newly laid or in summer months. Such damage and cracking is not covered by your home warranty.

Weeds can appear between joints, particularly block paving. Be sure to remove/treat weeds as soon as possible.



Changes to your home

If you decide, at any time, to make changes to your new home, it is important to remember:

- Any changes you wish to make must abide by your contractual agreement with Qualis, often known as the covenant.
- Should you wish to add an extension or make any additions/alterations to your home, always check the local authority planning regulations, as the work may be subject to planning permission or permitted development rights.
- Any changes you do make will not be covered by your Qualis warranty or the Build-Zone 10-year warranty and may also adversely affect all or part of your warranty cover. Please check with us before you proceed with any planned works.
- Generally, for any changes you wish to make, if you're at all unsure, please contact us and we will be happy to advise you.

Always seek advice from a suitably trained and qualified professional in advance of any works.

Please note, this guide is intended to assist the homeowner only to understand the initial maintenance requirements for their new home and does not replace professional advice.

It is not a comprehensive maintenance manual and should be referred to for guidance purposes only. Always seek advice from a qualified professional if you are unsure or need further help.

Repair and maintenance instructions provided by the manufacturer should always take precedence.

Health and safety is our priority, if in doubt always seek professional advice before commencing any works or maintenance.

