

Maintaining your new-build home: a practical homeowner schedule

Heating, ventilation, gutters, solar panels, drainage, external finishes and the records that protect warranties

PART OF THE CHECKSURE HOMEOWNER KNOWLEDGE BASE



Buying a new home



Handover



Snagging



Warranties



Home maintenance



Heating and ventilation



Electrical safety



Gardens



Building standards



Connectivity



Energy efficiency



General advice

The short answer: a new home still needs regular care. Servicing the heating system, keeping ventilation and drainage routes clear, checking seals and external finishes and retaining evidence of maintenance all help the home perform as designed. The exact requirements depend on the developer's handover information, the installed products and their warranties, so a general checklist should support—not replace—the instructions supplied for your property.

CheckSure's Homeowner Knowledge Base draws on practical experience of building, inspecting and resolving defects in new homes. Our aim is to explain what homeowners should reasonably expect, what may require further investigation and what steps they can take next.

New does not mean maintenance-free

A newly built home should arrive complete, safe and constructed to the agreed standards. Routine homeowner maintenance does not excuse poor workmanship or remove the developer's responsibility for qualifying defects. At the same time, the home contains moving parts, filters, seals, drainage routes, coatings and appliances that will deteriorate or stop working correctly if they are neglected.

The distinction matters when reporting a problem. A blocked gutter caused by accumulated leaves is maintenance. a gutter installed with the wrong fall may be a defect. A dirty ventilation filter is maintenance; a fan that was never commissioned correctly may be a defect. Carrying out reasonable maintenance—and keeping evidence—makes it easier to identify where responsibility genuinely lies.

Start with the information supplied at handover

Create one home file for manuals, certificates, warranties, installer details and service dates. A simple record makes routine care easier and gives a contractor useful information if a fault develops.

Create one home file for the property. Keep the warranty certificate, developer after-sales procedure, appliance manuals, commissioning certificates, electrical and heating records, paint details, drainage information, solar and battery documents, keys, guarantees and contact details. Register appliances and products where the manufacturer requires it.

The David Wilson Homes guidance supplied for this article illustrates the type of plot-specific advice a developer may give: prompt reporting of handover damage, appliance registration, servicing of installed equipment, keeping gutters clear, protecting drainage and ventilating the home while it dries. Its time limits and wording belong to that developer and document. they should not be assumed to apply to every new home. Your own reservation, handover, warranty and manufacturer documents control.



Figure 1. Routine maintenance includes clearing gutters, checking heating equipment and keeping extractor grilles clean.

Heating and hot-water systems

Gas or oil boilers

Arrange servicing at the interval stated by the manufacturer and warranty—commonly every year. Gas work must be carried out by a suitably qualified Gas Safe registered engineer. Keep the service record and invoice. A missed service may affect a manufacturer guarantee and can make it harder to show that a later failure was not caused by neglect.

Between services, monitor pressure and fault codes only in accordance with the user manual. Do not remove the boiler casing or attempt gas work. Know how to isolate the system and where to report loss of heating, hot water, a leak or a suspected gas emergency.

Air-source and ground-source heat pumps

Heat pumps should be serviced in line with the manufacturer's advice, often annually. For an air-source unit, keep the air path free from leaves, bins, bicycles, plants and other obstructions. Do not box the unit in to hide it. Watch for persistent icing, unusual noise, damaged guards or fault messages and refer them to a competent engineer.

A professional service may include electrical checks, controls, filters, coils, refrigerant pressures, leaks and major components. Ground-source systems may also require checks of loop pressure, temperatures and antifreeze concentration. Owners should not treat refrigerant or sealed-system work as DIY maintenance.

Hot-water cylinders and controls

Unvented cylinders and associated safety devices require competent servicing at the manufacturer's interval. Test user-operable controls only as instructed, keep discharge routes unobstructed and report unexpected water discharge. Do not cap or alter a safety pipe because it appears inconvenient.

Ventilation and moisture control

Modern homes rely on intentional ventilation. Keep trickle vents open where the system design requires them, use extract fans and boost controls, and avoid covering air valves. Clean accessible grilles and

replace or clean filters at the manufacturer's interval. Mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, demand-controlled systems and cooker hoods can have different arrangements, so identify which system you own before carrying out maintenance.

During the early drying period, consistent heating and ventilation help construction moisture escape. Leave space behind large furniture on cold external walls and respond to persistent condensation rather than simply painting over mould. A ventilation problem may be a defect, but blocked vents, disabled fans or overdue filters can reduce performance significantly.

Gutters, downpipes, gullies and roof drainage

Inspect rainwater routes regularly and after heavy leaf fall or severe weather. NHBC homeowner guidance recommends cleaning gutters at least annually. Remove leaves and debris where this can be done safely, and check that downpipes, gullies and visible outlets are not blocked. Wet staining below a gutter, overflowing joints or water discharging beside foundations deserves attention.

Flat-roof outlets and balcony drainage need particular care because a small blockage can create standing water. Do not climb onto roofs or lean from windows to clear high gutters. Use a competent contractor with safe access equipment. If overflow continues after a blockage is removed, record the conditions and report the possibility of poor falls, inadequate capacity or defective joints.

Solar panels, inverters and batteries

Solar photovoltaic panels generally need little intervention. In the UK, rain often keeps suitably tilted roof panels reasonably clean. Monitor generation through the inverter or app and learn the normal warning lights or fault messages. A sudden unexplained fall in output may justify an installer check.

Cleaning frequency depends on the location, pitch, dust, pollen, trees and birds. Current Energy Saving Trust guidance suggests periodic cleaning, but the installer's instructions take priority. Never walk on panels, use abrasive tools or pressure-wash equipment unless the manufacturer expressly permits it. Roof-mounted panels should normally be inspected or cleaned by a professional where safe ground-level work is not possible.

Keep the inverter ventilated and the surrounding area clear. Do not cover it or store combustible items against electrical equipment. Batteries have specific temperature, clearance, inspection and shutdown requirements. Follow the installer and manufacturer instructions and report damage, swelling, heat, unusual smells or alarms urgently.

Plumbing and drainage

Know the location of the internal stop tap and any external meter or isolation point. Check beneath sinks, around appliances, at visible pipe joints and near the cylinder for early signs of leakage. Flexible hoses and appliance connections should remain accessible enough to inspect.

Only toilet paper and human waste should enter a toilet. Wipes—including products described as flushable—nappies, sanitary products, cotton buds, fats and oils can block private and shared drainage. Clear accessible traps in accordance with the product instructions, but do not use harsh chemicals where they may damage seals or conflict with treatment systems. Repeated blockage, backing-up or foul smells may require a drainage specialist rather than repeated plunging.

Alarms and electrical safety

Test smoke, heat and carbon-monoxide alarms using their test controls at the interval stated by the manufacturer, and replace batteries or complete units when required. Never paint an alarm, cover it to stop nuisance activation or remove it without restoring protection immediately. Keep the handover schedule showing alarm locations and replacement dates.

Do not overload sockets or extension leads. Periodically inspect plugs, cables and portable equipment for damage. Fixed electrical alterations, consumer-unit work, solar equipment and EV charging systems should be handled by an appropriately competent electrician. Keep certificates for alterations because they may be needed for warranties, insurance and a future sale.

Windows, doors, sealants and finishes

Clean frames, tracks, drainage slots and thresholds using products approved by the manufacturer. Lubricate hinges, locks and moving parts only where instructed. Some window and door systems allow seasonal adjustment, but do not repeatedly alter hinges or locking cams without the product guidance. an installation defect can be disguised or made worse by incorrect adjustment.

Inspect sealant around baths, showers, worktops, sinks, windows and external junctions. Sealant is a maintenance item with a finite life. Repair deterioration before water penetrates behind finishes, using the correct sanitary, glazing or external-grade product. External timber, render, metalwork and decorative coatings need cleaning and eventual recoating at intervals influenced by exposure and the manufacturer's specification.

Lofts, garages and storage

A standard loft is not automatically designed as a storage floor. Boarding can compress insulation, obstruct ventilation, overload ceiling structures or interfere with services. Obtain appropriate advice before creating storage or altering trusses. Keep insulation away from equipment where clearances are required and do not block eaves ventilation.

Some garages are built with single-skin masonry and are not dry internal rooms. Wind-driven rain, cold surfaces and condensation can affect stored belongings. Keep vulnerable possessions raised, ventilate as designed and investigate concentrated leaks or drainage problems rather than assuming every damp patch is normal.

Gardens, boundaries and external areas

New turf, trees and planting pass into homeowner care quickly after completion. Water according to weather and any establishment instructions, avoid heavy use until turf has rooted and keep soil or mulch below damp-proof courses and ventilation openings. Do not change garden levels or block drainage routes without understanding the consequences.

Inspect fences, gates, sheds, paving and retaining features after storms. Clear channel drains and permeable-paving surfaces as directed. Report significant settlement, persistent standing water or movement rather than repeatedly filling depressions without identifying the cause.

A practical maintenance calendar

Regular household checks

- Test alarms as instructed and respond to fault indicators.
- Look for leaks, damp staining, unusual smells and persistent condensation.
- Use ventilation systems and keep designed air paths unobstructed.
- Monitor boiler, heat-pump, solar and battery displays for faults.
- Keep gullies, thresholds and accessible drains clear.

Spring and autumn

- Inspect gutters, downpipes and roof outlets, especially after leaf fall.
- Check external sealants, coatings, paths, boundaries and drainage.

- Remove obstructions around heat-pump outdoor units.
- Review window and door operation without making unsupported adjustments.
- Check solar panels visually from a safe position and compare generation trends.

Annual or manufacturer-defined tasks

- Service the boiler, heat pump, cylinder and other relevant equipment.
- Clean ventilation filters and arrange specialist servicing where specified.
- Review appliance, solar, battery and EV-charger warranty requirements.
- Inspect flat roofs and rainwater outlets safely.
- Update the home maintenance file with invoices, certificates and photographs.

When maintenance becomes a professional job

Use a competent specialist where work involves gas, refrigerant, fixed electrics, unvented cylinders, roof access, structural alteration, fire-safety systems or a risk of falling. Stop and seek advice if equipment is damaged, overheating, leaking, repeatedly tripping, producing combustion warnings or showing signs of electrical failure. Emergency risks should use the appropriate emergency service or isolation procedure—not an ordinary maintenance appointment.

Maintenance records protect the homeowner

Keep a simple log of the date, task, contractor, invoice, certificate, photograph and next due date. Record faults separately from routine maintenance and preserve proof that they were reported to the developer or provider. This supports warranty claims, prevents missed servicing and gives a future buyer a useful history of the home.

If a developer says a defect resulted from poor maintenance, ask what instruction or evidence supports that conclusion. Equally, if required maintenance was missed, be open about it. The aim is to establish cause and responsibility accurately, not to relabel every problem in favour of either side.

Common misunderstandings

“The developer maintains everything for two years”

No. The developer deals with qualifying snags and defects; the homeowner remains responsible for ordinary operation, cleaning, servicing and reasonable care from completion.

“Solar panels must be washed every year”

Not universally. Rain may keep tilted panels clean, while other locations need periodic cleaning. Follow the installer’s advice, monitor performance and use safe access.

“Servicing proves there cannot be a defect”

No. Maintenance evidence is useful, but a correctly serviced system can still contain an installation or product defect.

“If I can reach it, it is safe to maintain myself”

No. Height, gas, electricity, refrigerant, hot water and stored energy require competence and appropriate equipment.

Frequently asked questions

How often should the boiler or heat pump be serviced?

Follow the manufacturer's instructions, installer guidance and warranty conditions. An annual professional service is common for boilers, while heat-pump schedules vary by system.

Do I need to keep maintenance records?

Yes. Keep invoices, service sheets, certificates, photographs and correspondence because they can support warranty claims and future sale information.

Who is responsible for gutters, vents and external drainage after completion?

Routine cleaning and owner maintenance normally pass to the homeowner, while construction defects should still be reported promptly to the developer.

Key takeaways

- Use the handover pack and manufacturer instructions as the property-specific authority.
- Service heating and hot-water systems at the required intervals and keep evidence.
- Maintain ventilation, rainwater and drainage routes so the home can perform as designed.
- Monitor solar equipment; clean panels only when needed and without unsafe roof access.
- Maintenance and defects are different, although one can sometimes reveal the other.
- Keep a dated home file containing servicing, photographs, certificates and reports.
- Use qualified professionals for regulated, hazardous or specialist work.

EXPLORE FURTHER Explore the CheckSure Homeowner Knowledge Base for related guidance on buying, inspecting and looking after a new home. Please visit checksure.co.uk/knowledge-base/

Sources & References

David Wilson Homes — Warranty Information / Issue Guidelines. User-supplied 2022 handover sheet used as contextual source; its developer-specific rules should not be generalised.

<https://www.dwh.co.uk/help--support/>

NHBC — Guide to your new home. General new-home care, gutters, flat roofs, finishes and homeowner maintenance.

<https://www.nhbc.co.uk/binaries/content/assets/nhbc/guide-to-your-new-home-2024.pdf>

Gas Safe Register — homeowner gas-safety guidance. Official route for checking engineers and current gas-safety advice.

<https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/>

Energy Saving Trust — Heat-pump maintenance. Current servicing and outdoor-unit maintenance guidance.

<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/heat-pump-questions-answered/>

Energy Saving Trust — Solar-panel cleaning and maintenance. Current cleaning, monitoring and safe-access guidance.

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NHBC Foundation — Home comforts. Guidance on heating, ventilation and renewable systems.

<https://www.nhbc.co.uk/insights-and-media/foundation/publications/home-comforts-guidance-on-using-ventilation-heating-and-renewable-energy-systems>

Need help with your new home?

Contact CheckSure for an independent assessment of your new home.



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