



New Homeowners Handbook

Inspecting properties since 1989

All Surveyors Chartered RICS or RIBA

Award-winning Warranty

Consumer Code Protection



Introduction

This booklet provides you with important information for your new home, which has been provided by Architects Certificate, trading as ABC+ Warranty. We are always here to provide you with aftercare support. So please don't hesitate to contact us on 0161 928 8804 or email us on info@architectscertificate.co.uk.

Your developer has subscribed to our ABC+ Code for New & Newly Converted Property sales. You should have been left with a copy of our code, if not please ask your developer to provide you with a copy. You should also have a copy of your Residential New Build Latent Defects insurance policy and a copy of your warranty certificate.

Always contact your Household Building and Contents provider as well as your developer for any concerns you have within your property.

Contained within this booklet:

- Guide to the home.
- Snagging List
- Checklist for your new home
- First-year advice
- Safe DIY
- Maintaining your home
- What to do in an emergency
- ABC+ Consumer Code information

Guide to your home

Moving into your new home can be an exciting and sometimes, a stressful, time.

This booklet will help you form a checklist and keep all your useful documents together, including useful information, building plans and guarantees that you may need further in the property's life.

Most of all we want you to feel at home, relax, safe and fully aware of what to expect from your new built home.

We recommend you take time to look at each point in detail, noting any concerns, and anything you may not have immediately noticed with the developer on the day of completion.

During construction, your appointed ABC + Warranty RICs Qualified Surveyor will have carried out inspections, in compliance with the Building Regulations Act.

The final inspection and certification check by your Building Control is to confirm acceptability for insurance, and that your home has met the building regulation criteria. This is known as a Practical Completion process and sign off.

What is a snagging list?

Don't underestimate how important it is for you to check all service connections and inspect all the standards of finishes both internally and externally,

Open all the windows, turn on the taps and flush the WCs around your property, and make a full note.

This is called 'a snagging list' and this will need to be brought to the attention of the developer or your conveyancing solicitor before hand over and again soon after completion. Ensure what items you developer includes in the sale.

Our checklist is for you to use as you start to live in your new home. Locate the watermain valve tap, electrical fuse box and Gas and Electric meters. Make a note of the readings and find out who the current providers are and compare with other providers in your neighbourhood.

Please check for any other warranties covering appliances and guarantees upon and within your property. You will usually find 'stickers' on any appliances and meter covers. Make a note of them.

Your developer is responsible for all defined snagging issues and defects within the first 24-month period, but you **MUST** inform us 'the scheme administrators' within 30 days of noticing the concern regardless of this period, as it may invalidate your claim if you fail to do so.

ABC+ Warranty are here to support you during the first ten years of your policy.

Checklist for your new home	Y/N	Explanation
Is the property clean and tidy?		Check for any debris or poor workmanship.
Is there any staining of any of the walls or ceiling		Check for any water-ingress or potential leaks
Any signs of water or condensation?		Add ventilation, open windows or purchase a dehumidifier
Is the plaster smooth and neat?		Take photos of any cracks or pops in the plasterboard and monitor these over the next few weeks.
Flooring		
Tiled floors finish, secure, level, grouted & clean?		Note any underfloor heating guarantees
Timber floors, level, secured, clean?		Note any Timber guarantees
Any damp sports or marks on the flooring or carpets? - this could indicate any water – ingress or condensation.		As above check for any leaks, turn off stop cock if the floor is wet to prevent further damage.

Wall Tiling		
Check tiling is, Secure, grouted, clean, silicone joints?		Ensure all sealants are clear of mould and regularly maintained.
Any loose tiles?		Contact the developer if within 24 months of build
Kitchens & Bathrooms		
Are units & appliances fitted correctly? Flush all WCs.		Building Control would have signed off all drainage
Sanitary fittings clean & fitted correctly?		Ensure sealants are maintained and fittings are secure.
Does water flow through fittings, sink etc?		Find out your local water pressure as this may impact on the flow of water.
Check for any leaks from pipes & waste?		Note any foul smells or blockages, (water running back to other areas and not draining properly).
Check doors & draws close smoothly.		Periodically these will need adjusting and kept clean.
Extractor fan working and vent connected.		any unusual noises or condensation?

Windows & Doors		
Openings and handles all working and close correctly.		Check all handles and lock operate easily.
Keys provided to all doors and windows.		Check you have all the keys for the windows.
Door closures working?		Periodic maintenance check and not catching by floor coverings.
Glazing clean and crack/blemish free? Check sealants.		Ensure they are clear and not misty in any areas. All external sealants are in place and maintained.
No condensation between glazed units – check walls and ceilings.		Are the windows clear between the double glazing?
Trickle ventilation above openings		Ensure these are opened to allow airflow. Check if they are clean and free of cobwebs.
Heating & Electrical		
Check all lights work?		Make a note of where the fuse box is and keep a torch handy
Check all socket outlets work?		DO NOT USE IF THE SOCKET IS LOOSE IN THE WALL.
Alarms – Check smoke & fire detectors are working correctly?		Test all alarms regularly.

Heating appliance working?	Check for any burning/gas smell or signs of smoke. Turn the appliance off immediately and seek further advice from a heating specialist if you notice any concerns.
All radiators working with no leaks?	Find out when they were last installed or serviced.
All radiators aligned and secure on the wall?	Check for any leaking and ensure they are serviced regularly.
Consumer unit labelled correctly?	Check inside the cover are all the fuses labelled?
Mains gas, electric cupboards secure & key?	Make a note of the meter reading, take photos if possible.
Watermain turn off valve check?	Usually kept outside under a manhole
Check you understand how the thermostat works and where it is located.	This may need reprogramming to your preferred timings and temperature. Ensure the house is not kept too hot or too cold. Moderate temperature is always advisable.

Lofts		
Check loft space is fully insulated?		Be careful not to snag any lining material in the loft roof if installing any boarding. Be careful to tread on the support beams only.
Check light – if installed, vents and hatches/doors are all ok?		Insure items are clean and not damp as this can cause mould
Check access boarding, if fitted & water tank stands are secure?		Is the water tank level? Can you see any gaps in the flooring of the loft space into the rooms below?
Check the pipe insulation is complete?		It is covered by any foam or thermal covering?
Outside		
Check air vents and damp-proof courses are not obstructed by gravel or turfing.		Ensure the vents are not covered by any gravel or paving. Check plants and plant roots to ensure these vents are always kept clear.
Decorations		
All painting and sealants complete		The walls may still be drying out so check before any redecoration.

Fences and gates		
Are all fences and gates secure?		Do you need to buy any additional padlocks?
All timber and steel parts protected?		These will need regular maintenance, especially during periods of wet weather.
Check security lighting works?		Check the distances and adjust if required.
Completed level paths and drives?		Be mindful of any trip hazards or loose paving.
Drainage – check access chambers correctly fitted?		All warranties are issued once we have received a video of your working drainage systems into the outside manhole. Check where the mains sewers drain is in the garden and that it is not obstructed by any garden furniture or landscaping.
Check guttering and downspouts are secure and leak-free?		Ensure you maintain these regularly to ensure they are not blocked by leaves or debris from trees above.
Check all gullies and access chambers are debris free?		This will apply to all rainwater goods on the property, e.g., grids, manholes and guttering.
Check roof & ridge tiles for cracks, missing or loose?		If not mechanically fixed and are cement bedded, then periodic checks may be required.
Check all lead flashings are secure and complete?		This is the sealant to any adjoining walls, chimneys, and dormers on the roof.

First-year advice

During the first year in your new home will require a period of settlement and adjustment, allowing the new construction to dry. All the various materials used in the construction have varying degrees of moisture content. As the drying process takes place, cracks and popping will appear in walls, ceilings, and floors. In all the different materials – timber, plasterwork, and brickwork. This is all part of the normal settling process of a new building, as doesn't immediately mean there is anything to worry about. Monitor them regularly and keep a photo diary.

The builder is not legally obliged to rectify plaster cracks unless they appear and correlate with cracks showing outside the property, so you must monitor the impact of the drying out process yourself.

Shrinkage

- As your home is lived in and heated, timber the plaster elements will shrink, which may result in cracks appearing, or 'popping' of nail covers. These are all part of the normal new building settling process and should be left for a period of approximately 12 months. Decorations/cracks can be made good using a good quality filler. However, you may find that if you need to decorate within the first 24 months your chosen paint may need an extra coat as it may be absorbed within the new plaster coverings.

Water Staining

- Could be a sign of faulty plumbing or water ingress from the roof or walls. You should ABC+ Plus to report any issues, we may contact your developer. Take photos of any issues and note the time/day weather conditions as this may come is useful in relation to your concern.

Efflorescence

- This white deposit occurs on the curing of cementitious products. It can normally be removed by brushing with a dry brush. Do not wash with water as this could exaggerate the problem.

Other useful points to note:

- Condensation or mould – Wipe away any moisture immediately. Try to eliminate possible causes. There are solutions available to recognise any staining.
- Dry clothing outdoors wherever possible, make sure tumble dryer vents outside or come with heat pumps or condensers.
- Do not cover airbricks or vents. Ensure Plants/turf or gravel is not obstructing these vents.
- Keep doors to bathrooms and shower rooms closed to avoid moisture spreading or invest in dehumidifiers if you can.

Safe DIY – understand your limits.

Drilling, nailing into walls and laying flooring, Tree planting, landscaping or just digging in the garden needs to be within your skillset before carrying out any DIY. Ensure you do some research before you start and have the correct tools to hand. 17% of DIYers injure themselves and approximately 200,000 people visit the emergency department because of DIY, (updated 2023). If in doubt get a professional in.

- Care should be taken if you intend to remove the paper from a plasterboard partition wall, as aggressive scraping may damage the surface. As mentioned above your home will still be drying out and ‘settling’ so any decorating done during this time may need to be done again the following year.
- Care should be taken to firstly check the type of construction used – hollow or solid. This will determine the type of fixings required. Services could be hidden within the walls, usually with protective ducts but Stud detection devices can be hired or purchased to locate these.
- Always check before you undertake any alterations or major changes to your home as this could invalidate any insurance Warranty cover on your home. Always seek professional advice before removing or adding any walls within your home.
- When considering any additional room to your home, for example a: - Loft conversion, Conservatory, Garage or Porch. Planning permission, building regulation approval and permission from the developer, (if plans within the first few years), must be sought before planning and building work has commenced.

You must also notify ABC+ Warranty of any intention to carry out such works, as failure to do so may invalidate your cover.

How to 'Run In' your new build home checklist

Drying Out	
Wipe away any condensation on windows and other glass surfaces	
Cover pans when cooking	
Where possible, dry clothing outdoors. Vent dryers outdoor or fit a condenser	
Do not block air bricks or vents	
When possible, leave windows or trickle vents open	
Close doors when taking a bath or shower to avoid moisture spreading	
Switch on extractor fans during cooking, bathing, and showering	
Condensation	
If salt deposits occur on internal and external walls, wipe away	
Close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent steam going into colder rooms	
Open windows each day to allow a change of air	
Wipe down surfaces when moisture settles	
Shrinkage or Cracking	
Maintain a low background heat and try not to leave heating on too high	
When redecorating, use a good quality flexible filler on any gaps	
If cracks appear, leave them for a few months before trying to seal them	
If you feel cracks are more significant, report them to the developer	
Water Staining	
Report any evidence of water staining on walls and ceilings to your developer as soon as possible	
Snagging	
Keep and eye out for any scuffs, scratches, or marks on walls, surfaces, appliance and make your developer aware to be rectified	

Maintaining your home

It is the homeowner's responsibility to ensure that you maintain or regularly servicing of.

- Boilers – annual service and maintenance contract
- Windows (softwood) – redecorate as necessary, stain – 3 years, paint – 5 years. uPVC casement adjustment check and door frame alignment.
- Plastic gutters & downspouts – cleanout annually, replace rubber seals every 15 years.
- DIY – general DIY jobs, be aware your home is built from a variety of different materials you should use the correct fixing methods.
- Fire – Periodically check the operation of smoke alarms and confirm MOE (means of escape)
- Electricians – If you have trips operating regularly it may mean you have a faulty appliance. Each trip in the consumer unit should be correctly labelled.
- Long periods of vacancy – set the thermostat to 10 Degrees to avoid moisture build-up and reduce the risk of service pipes freezing.
- Flat roofs – these are standard exclusions to Insurance policies. – they may need to be re- felted or change the protective covering. Keep an eye out for any falling debris or water 'pooling' on the surface of the roof as this may cause damage and water-ingress.

For emergencies where you feel you are in immediate danger, please call 999.

For concerns where you are not in immediate danger, please use the helplines covered in the next page.

Certification Contacts & useful Contact information

If you smell Gas or suspect a Gas leak

Gas safe register has a complete list of registered gas engineers. Check the register to find advice on gas safety. Tel: 08004085500 Email: enquiries@gassaferegister.co.uk

National gas emergency service – 0800111999

Oil – 0845 6585080

<https://www.oftec.org/cpconsumers/order-certificates>

HETAS Ltd is the official body recognized by government to approve domestic heating appliances, fuels, and services. 01684 278170 info@hetas.co.uk

Electricity – power outages 0800 7838838

NICEIC is the UK body for electrical regulations. Check the register to find a registered electrician and receive advice. 01582 531 000 enquiries@niceic.com

NAPIT – <https://www.napit.org.uk/why-napit/homeowner.aspx>

EPC - <https://www.find-energy-certificate.gigital.communities.gov.uk/>

FENSA Windows – <https://www.fensa.org.uk/you've-got-your-windows-in>

Velux rooflights <https://www.velux.co.uk/legal/guarantee>

Government planning portal online planning and building regulations resource www.planningportal.gov.uk

LABC info (possibly incur a further charge)

<https://www.labc.co.uk/homeowners/where-can-i-get-copy-my-building-certificate>

ABC+ Code For New & Newly Converted Properties

Our Code has received approval from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute Consumer Code Approval Scheme CCAS.

The CCAS promotes self-regulation and requires our Code to be designed to strengthen consumer protection going beyond what is required in law.

The Code Sponsor has developed the Code to reflect best practice and takes account of the recommendations published in the Parliamentary Group Report 'More Homes - Fewer complaints' to increase protection for new homebuyers even more.

What Code Compliance means to you:

When you see the ABC+ Code symbol (the shield) you can be confident that the developer, homebuilder, and the sales agents they engage to sell the property....

- Will provide you with exemplary customer service
 - Will always treat you fairly and with respect
- Employs trained, knowledgeable, and caring staff
 - Will not use unfair practices or pressure selling techniques
- Will give you the right information at the right time throughout the sales process.
 - Will give you time to make an informed choice
- Will actively seek feedback from their customers and use it to improve their service
 - If things go wrong, provides you with access to a free, fair, and efficient dispute resolution service

What if things go wrong?

If something goes wrong when buying a new home, rest assured that you can get help. The seller is committed to providing easy access to an alternative dispute resolution service.

There is no cost to you.

The service administrator will not take sides but look at the facts and try to resolve the issue based on the information provided by both parties, any relevant Code of Practice and with reference to the law.

ADR is an independent and impartial process where a case is assessed by a third party. The service provider will review the evidence and make an impartial decision. They will give a reason for that decision and if possible, look to achieve a mutual outcome.

It is a free and efficient alternative to going to court!

The Code Subscriber (the developer) has committed to abide by any decision made by the ADR service provider, but you are not. If you are not satisfied with their decision, you may take the matter to the courts. However, the courts would take account of the ADR outcome when making their decision.

Firstly

The seller (the developer) must be given the opportunity to put things right from the start of your concerns.

Contact them and explain your concerns in full and inform them of how you want them to put right.

They must investigate your complaint and respond to you within 30 days in writing or by email.

If, after 30 days they have not responded, or you are not satisfied with their response ADR can be started

Dispute Resolution

CEDR will assess the information and determine if it is suitable for dispute resolution. If it is they will request a formal response from the seller. They have 14 days in which to respond.

If the seller responds, then both parties' information is assessed and if possible CEDR will propose a resolution.

If the seller does not respond it is assumed that they will not be contesting the claim, decision/award is made.

If the seller responds CEDR may try to settle the dispute via conciliation. The aim is to reach an acceptable and agreed conclusion within 30 days of receiving the sellers' written response.

CEDR may make an early decision on the outcome of the case and in doing so it may make an award.

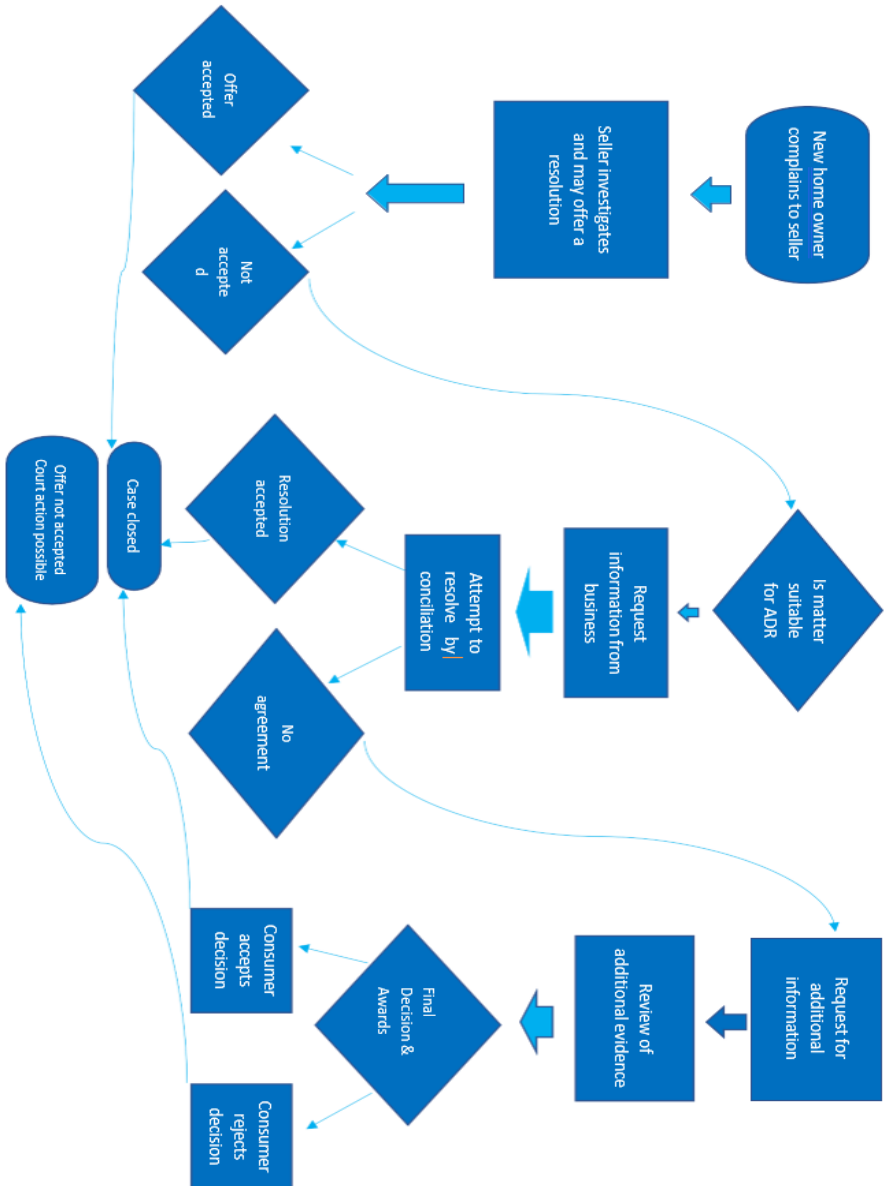
If agreement or settlement cannot be reached, formal adjudication may be considered.

Before they make an Adjudication a survey by an independent expert should be carried out which is paid for by the seller.

CEDR will also request written submissions from you and the seller.

Any Adjudication should be made within 60 days of receiving the formal response from the seller

The Process is illustrated on the next page...



What does the ADR provider do?

Ask both parties for their version of events.

Establish the facts and weigh up the evidence.

Explain their position to both you and the business.

Tell you if there has been a misunderstanding.

If applicable, tell the business that they have treated you unfairly and expect them to put things right.

Remember...

You are not bound by any decision and can go elsewhere for help.

How long will it take to sort things out?

It depends on how complex the issue is.

A genuine mix up or mistake might be resolved in a few days.

If more information is needed it might take a few weeks but you will be told if there is going to be a delay in making any decision.

The aim is to close the case within 90 days from when you made the written complaint to the business.

Are there any deadlines that I need to be aware of?

A referral to the ADR provider should be made as soon as possible.

If the referral is made after 6 months of making your complaint to the business, it may not be possible to help you.

The ADR provider will not be able to help if.

- The claim is not against a Subscriber to the Code.
- The issue is covered by the ABC+ Warranty.
- You are a business.
- A court or other Dispute Resolution Service is already involved.
- Your claim exceeds 25% of the purchase price of the property or £50000 whichever is the greater
- It is a personal injury claim.
- It is a conveyancing or land registration claim.
- The claim relates to loss of value or blight.
- The ADR provider will not be able to help you if you purchase your home more than 6 years ago (5 years in Scotland).

Contact Details

If you wish to speak to the Code Sponsor

Professional Consulting Certificate Ltd, trading as ABC+ Warranty 0161 928 8804

info@architectscertificate.co.uk

If you need advice on your rights as a consumer call

Citizens Advice Consumer helpline 0808 223 1133

Welsh Speakers 0808 223 1144

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Letters to:

Citizens Advice Consumer Service 2nd floor, Fairfax House

Merrion Street Leeds

LS2 8JU

To find an independent surveyor contact

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

024 7686 8555

contactrics@rics.org

www.rics.org

If you need to make an enquiry about the property you are buying or have a complaint, please contact the developer directly, your conveyancing solicitor or ABC+ Warranty



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