



HRM FACT SHEET: CRACKS AND STRUCTURAL ISSUES

Introduction

This information sheet has been provided because you have reported or noticed cracks on the internal or external elements of your home and explains what measures, if any, you or the council might plan to carry out.

Most homes will experience cracking at some point, no matter how well-designed or well-built they are. The cracks are not normally serious and are very unlikely to affect the stability of the building.



Cracks to internal or external walls around your property can be disturbing to see but it is usually nothing to worry about. Many cracks can be unsightly, and the decoration of the property can be difficult to maintain. There are a few reasons why these cracks are appearing, such as general settlement of the property, even decades after its construction. Every building will shrink and expand as the temperature, moisture and humidity (the amount of moisture in the air) change throughout the year. The various materials in the home respond differently to these seasonal changes, and these small movements can cause minor cracks to occur. Thermal movement is related to seasonal temperature and weather changes and is very common. Less common is subsidence and heave which are caused by the ground moving beneath, or near to, the home. If the ground beneath the foundations of a property moves, it can cause the property to move too. Movement is most commonly caused by the effect of trees on clay soils, which can lead to the soils shrinking (subsidence) and swelling (heave). Other common causes of ground movement are defective drainage or broken water pipes so it is important to understand when to make the council aware that there might be an issue.

The council are guided by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and their “Digest 251, Assessment of damage in low-buildings”. BRE provides research, advice and standards for both public and private sector organisations in the UK. Digest 251 provides surveyors advice on what level of cracking is acceptable and when building repairs are necessary.

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When is cracking cause for concern?

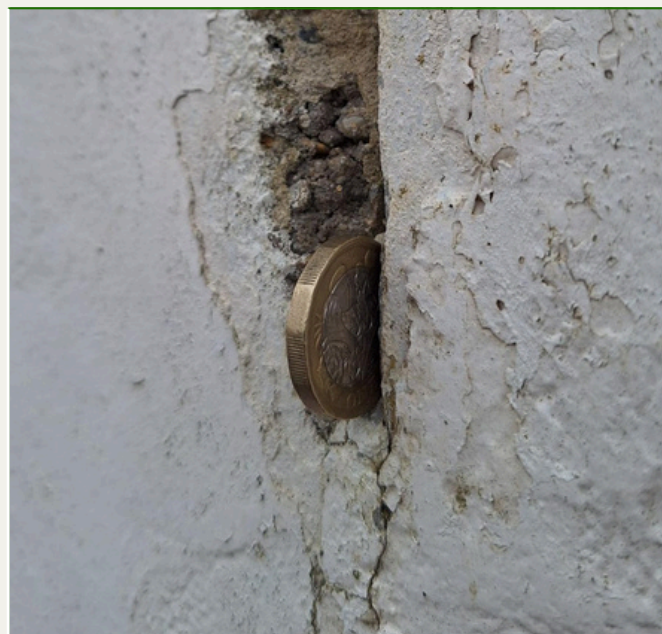
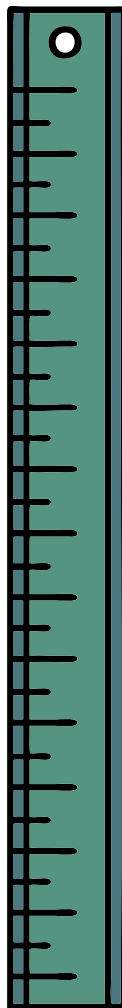
If you do not have a ruler or tape measure, you can estimate how wide a crack is by holding the edge of a one pound coin against it (the coin is about 3mm wide). A crack that is 3mm or less is generally regarded as being cosmetic and won't affect a property's structural stability or safety. You can repair it using a suitable filler, grout or sealant the next time you redecorate your home. You may find that the crack reappears, but this is likely to be due to thermal movement and is not anything to worry about.

You should contact Housing Repairs & Maintenance if a crack:

- **Is more than 5mm wide at any point.**
- **Is more than 3mm at any point (a pound coin) and is wide at one end and narrow at the other.**

You will see from the BRE digest 251 guidelines shown below that cracks up to 5mm wide might need an inspection by Housing Repairs & Maintenance to carry out minor external repairs or door adjustments so if you are concerned, please contact us for advice.

Any cracks greater than 5mm must be reported so that a thorough structural survey can be undertaken. Monitoring is likely to be required, often extending over several months.



Guidelines



0 - Hairline cracks less than 0.1mm.

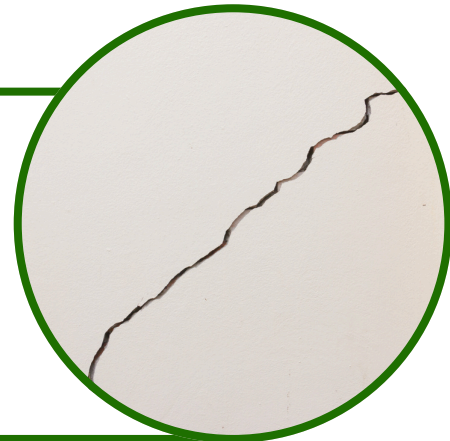
No action required. Hairline cracks are classed as negligible.

Reporting is not required.

1 - Fine cracks of up to 1mm.

Fine cracks can be treated easily by the resident using normal internal decoration methods. Damage is generally restricted to internal wall finishes and cracks are rarely visible in the external brickwork.

Reporting is not required.



2 - Crack widths up to 5mm.

Internal cracks can be easily filled and decorated by the resident. Recurrent cracks can be masked by suitable wall linings.

Reporting is not required.

External cracks that are visible and external repointing may be required to ensure the building's weather-tightness. Doors and windows may stick slightly and require easing and adjusting.

Housing Repairs & Maintenance to be contacted if required.

3 - Crack widths of 5 to 15mm (or several of e.g. 3mm and wider at one end)


Monitoring is likely to be required often extending over several months. Cracks that might require some repairs by a specialist council contractor. Repointing of external brickwork and possibly a small amount of brickwork to be replaced. Doors and windows sticking might require adjustment. Service pipes could fracture and need checking. Weather-tightness of the building is often impaired.

Housing Repairs & Maintenance to be contacted.



Minimising minor cracking

You can minimise cracking by following a few simple steps:



Try to keep an even temperature throughout your home, even in the rooms that you do not normally use. When you first start using your central heating (in a brand new home or after the summer months), try to use it sparingly so that the structure of your home warms up and dries out gradually.



Keep your home well-ventilated to allow moisture to evaporate as the structure dries out. You can do this by keeping windows open for as long possible each day, and by leaving trickle vents (slotted vents in the window frames) open – even in the winter, when your heating is on.

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Kurdish	ئەگەر دەتەوێت ئەم بەلگەنامەیە وەر بگێڕ درێت یان پێویستیت بە شیوازیکی دەستگەیشتن هەمە وەك چاپی گەورە یان نووسینی نابینایان braille، تەكایە پەموەندی بکە بە 0300 123 4000، و بژاردەى 3 هەڵبژێرە.
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