



MR SWEEP CHIMNEYS & STOVES

THE HOMEOWNER'S CHIMNEY & STOVE MAINTENANCE GUIDE

**Your year-round guide to looking after your
chimney, log burner and solid-fuel appliance
Maintenance • Sweeping • Fuel • Safety • Seasonal
checks**

07380 805 327

Serving Staffordshire & surrounding areas

WELCOME TO MR SWEEP

A chimney and stove are long-term parts of your home.

Like a boiler, roof or heating system, they need regular care if you want them to continue working properly.

Good maintenance doesn't have to be complicated.

A few simple checks throughout the year, combined with appropriate chimney sweeping and professional maintenance when required, can help you spot potential problems before they become major ones.

This guide has been created by **Mr Sweep Chimneys & Stoves** for homeowners across Staffordshire.

It is designed to give you a straightforward maintenance routine you can follow throughout the year.

CONTENTS

- 1st Why Maintenance Matters
- 2nd Your Annual Chimney & Stove Routine
- 3rd Spring Checks
- 4th Summer Maintenance
- 5th Autumn Preparation
- 6th Winter Checks
- 7th How Often Should You Sweep?
- 8th Why Chimneys Need Sweeping
- 9th What Happens During a Sweep?
- 10th Looking After Your Stove
- 11th Checking Your Stove Door
- 12th Checking the Door Seal
- 13th Checking Stove Glass
- 14th Checking Firebricks
- 15th Checking the Stove Body
- 16th Ash & Ash Removal
- 17th Looking After Your Firewood
- 18th Your Log Store

19th	Fuel Mistakes to Avoid
20th	Carbon Monoxide Safety
21st	Smoke Alarms
22nd	Chimney Warning Signs
23rd	Stove Warning Signs
24th	When You Should Stop Using Your Stove
25th	Moving Into a New Home
26th	Buying a New Stove
27th	Smoke Control Areas
28th	Staffordshire Homeowners
29th	Keeping Your Records
30th	Your Annual Maintenance Checklist
31st	The Mr Sweep Maintenance Calendar
32nd	Frequently Asked Questions
33rd	The Mr Sweep Golden Rules
34th	Final Word From Mr Sweep

1. WHY MAINTENANCE MATTERS

A stove is designed to operate under demanding conditions.

It is exposed to:

- High temperatures.
- Combustion gases.
- Ash.
- Soot.
- Repeated heating and cooling.
- Moisture.
- Fuel deposits.

Over time, components naturally wear.

Your chimney can also accumulate deposits or develop other problems.

Regular maintenance gives you an opportunity to identify issues before they become more serious.

2. YOUR ANNUAL CHIMNEY & STOVE ROUTINE

A simple yearly routine can be divided into four stages:

SPRING

Check the appliance after the main heating season.

SUMMER

Arrange sweeping and maintenance if required.

AUTUMN

Prepare the stove and fuel before regular use begins.

WINTER

Monitor how the appliance behaves and deal with problems promptly.

3. SPRING CHECKS

Once you've finished using your stove regularly for the winter, take a few minutes to look over the appliance.

Check:

- Stove glass.
- Door.
- Door seal.
- Firebricks.
- Grate, where fitted.
- Ashpan, where fitted.
- Stove body.
- Surrounding hearth.
- Any unusual staining or damage.

Look for changes

Think about how your stove behaved during the winter.

Did you notice:

- More smoke?
- Poorer draw?
- More difficult lighting?
- Unusual smells?
- Excessive soot?
- Dirty glass?
- Unusual noises?

Make a note of anything unusual.

4. SUMMER MAINTENANCE

Summer is an excellent time to arrange chimney sweeping.

The stove isn't being used as frequently, and you can deal with maintenance before the next heating season.

Consider arranging:

- Chimney sweeping.
- Stove maintenance.
- Repairs.
- Replacement parts where necessary.
- Further inspection if problems were identified.

MR SWEEP TIP

Don't wait until October to discover that your chimney needs attention.

5. AUTUMN PREPARATION

Before you light your first serious fire of the season:

- Check the stove.
- Check the chimney has been swept when due.
- Check your carbon monoxide alarm.

Check your smoke alarms.
Check your fuel.
Make sure logs are dry.
Check the log store.
Remove combustible items from around the appliance.
Read your stove manufacturer's instructions if you've forgotten the correct operating procedure.

6. WINTER CHECKS

During winter, pay attention to how your appliance behaves.
You don't need to inspect it every time you light it.
But if something changes, take notice.

Watch for:

- Smoke entering the room.
- Unusual smells.
- Difficulty lighting.
- Poor draw.
- Excessive smoke.
- Unusual noises.
- Excessive deposits.
- Stove overheating.
- Damaged components.

A sudden change is particularly worth investigating.

7. HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU SWEEP?

There is no single sweeping interval that is suitable for every chimney.
The appropriate frequency can depend on:

- What fuel you burn.
- How often you use the appliance.
- The type of appliance.
- The chimney/flue.
- The installation.
- How the appliance is operated.
- Manufacturer recommendations.
- Professional advice.

General principle

The more frequently an appliance is used, the more important regular maintenance becomes.

Your chimney sweep can advise you on an appropriate schedule based on your individual circumstances.

8. WHY CHIMNEYS NEED SWEEPING

Sweeping removes accumulated deposits and material from the chimney or flue.
This can include:

- Soot.
- Combustion deposits.
- Debris.
- Nesting material.
- Other obstructions.

Regular sweeping can help maintain the chimney's ability to carry combustion products safely away from the appliance.

Sweeping is maintenance — not just cleaning

A sweep may also notice obvious signs that something needs further investigation.

9. WHAT HAPPENS DURING A SWEEP?

The exact procedure depends on the appliance and chimney.

A typical appointment may involve:

- 1stPreparing the work area.
 - 2ndProtecting surrounding surfaces.
 - 3rdChecking the appliance and access.
 - 4thSelecting an appropriate sweeping method.
 - 5thSweeping the chimney/flue.
 - 6thRemoving deposits.
 - 7thChecking accessible areas.
 - 8thCleaning the work area.
 - 9thDiscussing any findings.
 - 10thProviding appropriate documentation where applicable.
-

10. LOOKING AFTER YOUR STOVE

Your stove should be checked periodically.

Always follow your manufacturer's instructions.

A basic visual inspection can include:

- Door.
- Glass.
- Door seal.
- Firebricks.
- Grate.
- Ashpan.
- Air controls.
- Stove body.
- Flue connection where accessible.

If you're unsure about a component, don't dismantle the appliance unnecessarily.

11. CHECKING YOUR STOVE DOOR

Your stove door should:

- Open and close properly.
- Latch correctly.
- Remain secure during operation.

Check for:

- Damage.
- Misalignment.
- Excessive movement.
- Problems with the latch.

If the door doesn't operate correctly, seek appropriate advice.

12. CHECKING THE DOOR SEAL

Many stoves use a rope seal around the door.

Over time it can deteriorate.

Look for:

- Fraying.
- Compression.
- Gaps.
- Loose sections.
- Obvious deterioration.

If you suspect the seal is no longer functioning correctly, consult your appliance manufacturer or an appropriately qualified professional.

13. CHECKING STOVE GLASS

The glass should be checked regularly.

Look for:

- Cracks.
- Chips.
- Damage.
- Excessive staining.

Some staining can occur during normal use.

Persistent blackening may indicate issues with:

- Fuel.
- Air supply.
- Combustion.
- Operating technique.
- Appliance condition.

If the glass is cracked or damaged, don't ignore it.

14. CHECKING FIREBRICKS

Firebricks help protect the stove body from high temperatures.

They can crack with use.

Small cracks may not necessarily mean immediate replacement, depending on the manufacturer's guidance.

However, severely damaged or deteriorated bricks should be assessed.

Always check the stove manual

Different appliances use different materials and designs.

15. CHECKING THE STOVE BODY

Look over the visible stove body.

Look for:

- Cracks.
- Warping.
- Corrosion.
- Unusual discolouration.
- Damage.
- Loose components.

If something appears significantly different from when the stove was installed, investigate it.

16. ASH & ASH REMOVAL

The amount of ash produced depends on the fuel and appliance.

Follow your manufacturer's instructions.

Some appliances are designed to operate with a small ash bed.

Others may require different management.

Important

Never remove hot ash and place it into a combustible container.

Ash can retain heat for a surprisingly long time.

Use an appropriate metal container where recommended and store it safely away from combustible materials.

17. LOOKING AFTER YOUR FIREWOOD

Your logs need to stay dry.

A good fuel routine is:

BUY

Purchase suitable firewood from a reputable supplier.

CHECK

Check moisture content where appropriate.

STORE

Keep logs protected from rain while allowing air circulation.

USE

Burn appropriate dry wood according to your appliance instructions.

18. YOUR LOG STORE

A good log store should:

- Protect wood from rain.
- Keep logs off the ground.
- Allow ventilation.
- Avoid trapping moisture.

- Be conveniently located but safely away from the stove.

Don't store logs against the stove

The stove produces high temperatures.

Follow the manufacturer's guidance concerning fuel storage and clearances.

19. FUEL MISTAKES TO AVOID

Never use your stove as a household waste disposal system.

Avoid burning:

- Plastic.
- Painted timber.
- Treated timber.
- MDF.
- Chipboard.
- Furniture.
- Household rubbish.
- Laminated materials.
- Unknown waste wood.

Always follow your stove manufacturer's fuel recommendations.

20. CARBON MONOXIDE SAFETY

Carbon monoxide can be produced by combustion appliances.

It is:

- Colourless.
- Odourless.
- Potentially fatal.

Never rely on smell to detect a problem.

Have an appropriate carbon monoxide alarm

Install and maintain it according to the manufacturer's instructions and applicable requirements.

Test it regularly.

Know its replacement date.

21. SMOKE ALARMS

Your stove isn't the only thing you should maintain.

Make sure your home's smoke alarms are also checked regularly.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Test them.

Replace batteries where applicable.

Replace old alarms according to the manufacturer's recommended service life.

22. CHIMNEY WARNING SIGNS

Contact an appropriate professional if you notice:

- Smoke entering the room.
 - Persistent poor draw.
 - Sudden changes in chimney performance.
 - Debris falling down the chimney.
 - Bird nesting.
 - Excessive soot.
 - Heavy deposits.
 - Water ingress.
 - Unusual smells.
 - Signs of damage.
-

23. STOVE WARNING SIGNS

Your stove should also be monitored.

Warning signs can include:

- Cracked glass.
 - Damaged door.
 - Failed door seal.
 - Severe firebrick deterioration.
 - Warping.
 - Excessive corrosion.
 - Unusual glowing.
 - Excessive heat.
 - Smoke escaping from unexpected locations.
 - Sudden changes in operation.
-

24. WHEN YOU SHOULD STOP USING YOUR STOVE

You should not continue using an appliance simply because it still produces heat.

Stop using it and seek appropriate professional advice if there is:

- A serious suspected chimney blockage.
- A carbon monoxide alarm activation.
- Significant damage.
- Smoke entering the property.
- Suspected chimney fire.
- Serious stove damage.
- Cracked or broken glass.
- A major unexplained change in operation.

If there is an immediate danger, prioritise getting everyone to safety and contact the appropriate emergency service.

25. MOVING INTO A NEW HOME

If your new home has a stove, don't automatically assume it is ready for regular use.

Find out:

When the chimney was last swept.

What appliance is installed.

What fuel it uses.

Who installed it.

Whether the chimney has been lined.

Whether installation documents exist.

Whether maintenance has been carried out.

Whether a carbon monoxide alarm is installed.

If you cannot establish the history, arrange appropriate professional advice before relying on the appliance.

26. BUYING A NEW STOVE

A new stove is a significant investment.

Don't select one based solely on appearance.

Consider:

- Correct heat output.
- Appliance suitability.
- Chimney requirements.
- Flue requirements.
- Ventilation.
- Hearth requirements.
- Fuel type.
- Local restrictions.
- Installation requirements.
- Ongoing maintenance.

Think about the complete system

The stove, chimney, flue, hearth and ventilation all need to work together.

27. SMOKE CONTROL AREAS

Smoke Control Areas have additional rules concerning the emission of smoke from domestic appliances.

Depending on where you live, these rules can affect:

- Which appliances can be installed.
- Which fuels can be burned.
- How appliances can be operated.

You should always check the rules applying to your particular property.

28. STAFFORDSHIRE HOMEOWNERS

Staffordshire covers a large area and includes several different local authority areas.

Smoke Control Area arrangements therefore aren't necessarily the same throughout the county.

Stoke-on-Trent, for example, contains Smoke Control Areas.

If you live elsewhere in Staffordshire, don't assume the same restrictions automatically apply.

Before buying or changing a stove:

Check the rules for your exact property.

29. KEEPING YOUR RECORDS

Create a simple folder for your chimney and stove paperwork.

Keep:

- Chimney-sweeping records.
- Installation documents.
- Stove manuals.
- Warranty information.
- Maintenance records.
- Receipts.
- Relevant inspection documentation.
- Repair records.

Why keep everything?

It gives you a useful history of your appliance.

It can also help if:

- You need a repair.
 - You replace a component.
 - You sell the property.
 - Your insurer asks about maintenance.
 - You need to identify the appliance model.
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30. YOUR ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

CHIMNEY

Swept when required.

No known blockage.

No unexplained smoke problems.

No unusual debris.

No obvious signs of deterioration.

STOVE

Glass checked.

Door checked.

Door seal checked.

Firebricks checked.

Air controls checked.

Stove body checked.

Any damaged components addressed.

FUEL

Suitable fuel.

Dry firewood.

Proper storage.

No household waste being burned.

SAFETY

Carbon monoxide alarm tested.
Smoke alarms tested.
Hearth checked.
Combustibles kept away.
Children and pets protected.

PAPERWORK

Sweep record retained.
Appliance manual retained.
Installation information retained.
Repair records retained.

31. THE MR SWEEP MAINTENANCE CALENDAR

JANUARY

Monitor stove performance during winter.
Check for unusual smoke or smells.

FEBRUARY

Continue monitoring fuel and stove operation.

MARCH

Start thinking about end-of-season maintenance.

APRIL

Inspect the stove after winter use.

MAY

Consider arranging your chimney sweep if due.

JUNE

Good time for chimney maintenance and repairs.

JULY

Check and organise your log store.

AUGUST

Make sure you have suitable fuel for the coming season.

SEPTEMBER

Check your stove and safety alarms.

OCTOBER

Get everything ready before regular winter use.

NOVEMBER

Monitor the stove carefully as usage increases.

DECEMBER

Enjoy your stove — but continue to operate it correctly and safely.

32. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I need to sweep my chimney every year?

Not necessarily in every circumstance.

The appropriate frequency depends on factors including appliance type, fuel, usage and professional guidance.

Speak to your chimney sweep about your individual circumstances.

Is sweeping only necessary if the chimney looks dirty?

No.

You cannot reliably assess the inside of a chimney simply by looking at the appliance.

Appropriate sweeping is part of regular maintenance.

Can I sweep the chimney myself?

Some homeowners may be tempted to do so.

However, appropriate equipment, knowledge and access are important.

A professional chimney sweep can carry out the work and provide appropriate documentation where applicable.

Does burning dry wood mean my chimney doesn't need sweeping?

No.

Dry wood can help improve combustion, but it does not eliminate the need for appropriate chimney maintenance.

Why does my stove smell when it isn't being used?

There can be several possible causes, including deposits, dampness, downdraught or other chimney conditions.

If the smell is persistent or unusual, seek appropriate advice.

Why does my stove smoke when I open the door?

Possible causes include:

- Poor draw.
- Incorrect operation.
- Insufficient airflow.
- Cold chimney.
- Overloading.
- Fuel issues.
- Chimney obstruction.

If it happens regularly, investigate it.

Can I use the stove if the carbon monoxide alarm is old?

Don't rely on an expired alarm.

Replace it according to the manufacturer's instructions.

What should I do if I see flames coming from my chimney?

Treat it as a potential chimney fire.

Call **999**, get people to safety and follow the Fire and Rescue Service's instructions.

33. THE MR SWEEP GOLDEN RULES

1. SWEEP YOUR CHIMNEY

Have it swept at an appropriate interval.

2. LOOK AFTER YOUR STOVE

Small maintenance issues shouldn't be ignored.

3. BURN SUITABLE FUEL

Use the fuel recommended for your appliance.

4. KEEP YOUR WOOD DRY

Good fuel makes a difference.

5. NEVER BURN HOUSEHOLD WASTE

Your stove isn't an incinerator.

6. CHECK YOUR ALARMS

Carbon monoxide and smoke alarms should be tested regularly.

7. WATCH FOR CHANGES

If your stove behaves differently, find out why.

8. KEEP YOUR RECORDS

A simple folder can save you time later.

9. KNOW YOUR LOCAL RULES

Smoke Control Area requirements can vary.

10. ASK WHEN YOU'RE UNSURE

Professional advice can prevent small problems becoming big ones.

34. THE MR SWEEP YEARLY CHECKLIST

ONCE A YEAR

Chimney sweeping arranged when due.

Stove inspected.

Carbon monoxide alarm checked.

Smoke alarms checked.

Stove glass checked.

Door seal checked.

Firebricks checked.

Log store checked.

Fuel supply checked.

Maintenance records updated.

YOUR MR SWEEP MAINTENANCE PLAN

SPRING

Inspect

Look over your stove after winter use.

SUMMER

Sweep

Arrange chimney sweeping and maintenance when required.

AUTUMN

Prepare

Get your stove, fuel and safety equipment ready.

WINTER

Monitor

Use the appliance correctly and watch for changes.

A FINAL WORD FROM MR SWEEP

Looking after a chimney and stove doesn't need to be difficult.

The best approach is to make maintenance part of your normal household routine.

Don't wait until your stove stops working.

Don't wait until smoke enters the room.

Don't wait until you discover that your chimney hasn't been swept for years.

A little regular attention can help you enjoy your stove with greater confidence.

Remember:

Sweep it.

Maintain it.

Burn the right fuel.

Check your alarms.

Watch for warning signs.

Ask for help when you're unsure.

MR SWEEP CHIMNEYS & STOVES

PROFESSIONAL CHIMNEY SWEEPING

STAFFORDSHIRE & SURROUNDING AREAS

Whether you're due for your regular chimney sweep, have recently moved into a property with a stove, or are concerned about your chimney or appliance, **Mr Sweep Chimneys & Stoves** is here to help.

CLEAN CHIMNEY

SAFE STOVE

PEACE OF MIND

BOOK YOUR CHIMNEY SWEEP

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This guide is provided for general homeowner information and is not a substitute for professional advice, appliance manufacturer's instructions, Building Regulations, government guidance, local-authority requirements, insurance conditions or emergency-service instructions.

Requirements concerning solid-fuel appliances, chimney sweeping, fuels, ventilation and Smoke Control Areas can vary depending on the property, appliance, chimney, flue, fuel and location.

Rules and guidance can also change.

Always check the current requirements applying to your own property and appliance.

Where specialist inspection, testing, installation, repair or other professional work is required, seek advice from an appropriately qualified professional.

In an emergency, contact the appropriate emergency service.

Mr Sweep Chimneys & Stoves accepts no responsibility for decisions made solely on the basis of this general guide.

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