

Repairs for private tenants

This information is for people renting privately in Northern Ireland.

Look at your tenancy agreement to see who handles repairs in your property. If your home is unsafe or dangerous to live in, you can get help with getting your landlord to do repairs.

First, try and work things out with your landlord.

Then, contact your local council if your landlord is not doing repairs. The environmental health department can send an officer to check that your home is safe and meets legal standards.

Responsibilities for repairs

Private landlords are responsible for:

- checking and fixing appliances they provide
- painting and decorating to fix normal wear and tear
- water, gas and electrical systems
- fixing the structure and outside of the property (for example, roof, walls, chimney)
- mould or damp from structural problems (such as bad ventilation, damage to the roof)

As a tenant, you must take care of the property and keep things in good order. You're also responsible if you, or someone in your home, causes damage. For example:

- painting and redecorating items you damaged

- causing damage by using something you know is unsafe (for example, you know the sink leaks and you use it anyway)

Review your tenancy agreement before you sign it and check:

- what repairs you're responsible for
- if you must paint and redecorate before you leave

Be careful when making changes to your home. Get your landlord's written permission before you:

- paint, redecorate or make any structural changes to the property
- replace the landlord's items with your own (for example, a cooker or washing machine)

Repairs without a tenancy agreement

Your landlord may still have certain responsibilities, even if you do not have a tenancy agreement.

If your tenancy began after 1 April 2007 and you either:

- do not have a tenancy agreement, or
- the agreement doesn't include repairs

Your landlord is responsible for 'default obligations.' These include:
the exterior of the property – including paintwork

- the structure of the property – including drains, gutters and pipes
- all water, gas, heating, electricity and sanitation systems
- all appliances they provide
- all fixtures and furnishings they provide

If your tenancy began before 1 April 2007, your landlord is only responsible for:

- the structure of the property
- meeting basic fitness standards
- making sure the property is not a risk to public health or safety

Getting repairs with a private landlord

To ask your private landlord for repairs and get help if they do not complete repairs, follow the steps below.

Document the process

Take photographs of the things your landlord should repair.

Write to your landlord

Put everything in writing, even if you spoke to your landlord about the repair. You should:

- [write to say what repairs you need](#) – include pictures and keep a copy for yourself
- [write to follow up](#) if your landlord does not respond – include the date when you expect them to finish repairs, make sure to give a reasonable amount of time
- [write to let them know you're contacting the local council](#)
- [contact your local council](#)

Video: Help if your private landlord is not doing repairs

Video transcript

Private landlords don't have set times for carrying out repairs. When you report a problem, ask your landlord or estate agent how long they'll take to fix it.

If your landlord doesn't fix the problem in the time they said they would, contact them again. Do this in writing to make sure you have a record of following up with them.

Tenants often ask us if they can stop paying rent if their landlord doesn't do repairs. This is a risky step. Not paying rent means you're breaking your contract and it can lead to eviction.

But it can be really hard if your landlord doesn't respond, or they won't fix the problem. You can contact environmental health in your local council for help.

An environmental health officer can call out to your home and check its safe for you to live in. Show them proof of you already telling your landlord about the problem.

They can talk to your landlord and make them do repairs if your home doesn't meet basic safety standards.

If your contract ended, or will end soon, your landlord could decide to evict you instead of doing the repairs. A reasonable landlord won't evict you just for asking for repairs, but it is a risk.

Get in touch with Housing Rights if you need to talk through getting repairs done. You can call, email or chat to an adviser online.

Letting people into your home

In your tenancy agreement, you give permission for people to enter your home for certain reasons. For example, to carry out inspections or repairs.

Before anyone goes into your home, your landlord must:

- give you at least 24 hours' notice, and
- get your explicit permission

If you do not let your landlord or a tradesperson into your home, you might:

- not get the repairs the property needs
- get an eviction notice from your landlord
- have to pay for damage caused because repairs could not be done (for example, you did not let the landlord in to fix the roof and there is water damage)

Standards in your privately rented home

A private rental must be in good condition. This means it must meet 'fitness standards'. The environmental health department of your local council can decide if a property meets the standards.

For a rental property to meet minimum fitness standards, it must have:

- working drains

- a piped supply of drinking water
- an easily accessible toilet and sink
- either a bath or shower with hot and cold water
- adequate facilities for lighting, heating and ventilation
- proper space to prepare and cook food, including a sink

The property must not:

- be in serious disrepair
- have structural problems
- have dampness which could impact occupiers' health

If a property does not meet fitness standards, [environmental health can help get your landlord to do repairs](#).

Leaving because of no repairs

If you want to leave because a landlord did not do repairs, you should:

- write to the landlord and explain which repairs are their legal responsibility
- write again to say they are breaking your tenancy agreement and you'll send a notice to quit if they do not finish repairs by a certain date
- send them a notice to quit and state that you're sending it because of a material breach

This can help you defend your case if your landlord takes you to court for rent arrears. It's still up to the judge to decide if the breach of contract makes the agreement void.

If you can show there was a 'material breach', you cannot be sued. This is when you can prove your landlord broke your agreement. A material breach must be very serious.

It's always risky to leave a tenancy early. [Speak to our advisers](#) and get help before you leave your tenancy.

Complaining about a letting agent

Letting agents may have their own complaints process. They are not regulated, so always choose an agent with a good reputation. You may be able to complain to

[The Property Ombudsman \(TPO\).](#)

TPOS only handles complaints against agents who are a [member of TPO](#). You can contact your local council for help with a letting agent who is not completing repairs.

[First letter](#) (215.12 KB) [Second letter](#) (216.61 KB) [Third letter](#) (425.32 KB)

More advice

- [Help from the council](#)
- [Paying rent for bad housing](#)