Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice/eviction/eviction-private-tenancy

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Eviction from a private tenancy

This information is for people renting privately in Northern Ireland.

If you're a private tenant, your landlord can evict you. Legally, eviction is when you are removed from a property. Your landlord must follow a process that includes:

- giving you written notice, called 'notice to quit'
- taking you to court
- getting a court order
- enforcing the order with the Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO)

This is sometimes called 'due process'. If your landlord does not follow due process, this may be an illegal eviction. Get advice as soon as possible if you are in this situation.

Reasons for eviction

Your landlord needs to give a reason to evict you if you:

- have a written tenancy agreement, with a fixed term that has not ended yet
- did not have a written tenancy agreement, and have rented the property for less than six months

Your landlord does not need a reason to evict you if:

- the fixed term stated on your tenancy agreement has ended, and you have not signed a new one

- you never had a written agreement and you have rented the property for more than six months

If the fixed term has not ended yet, your landlord can try to evict you if:

- you broke the terms of your agreement (for example, you owe rent)
- your agreement lets you or the landlord end the tenancy early. For example, if there is a break clause

Getting a notice to quit

The landlord must give you a notice to quit. For a notice to quit to be valid, it has to:

- be in writing – delivered in person, by post, email or text message
- give you a certain amount of notice before you need to leave – called the 'notice period'

The amount of notice you get depends on how long you have lived in the property. You get:

- four weeks if you rented your home for less than a year
- eight weeks if you rented your home for 1 to 10 years
- 12 weeks if you rented your home for 10 years or more

Your landlord cannot force you out of the property once the notice period ends.

Your landlord must take you to court if they want to remove you.

Get advice on your options if you are in this situation. You may have to pay costs if your landlord goes to court to evict you.

Talk to your landlord to see if you can work things out so you can stay in the property. If you cannot afford your rent, there may be help you are entitled to. Our advice service can look at your options.

Our mediation service can help you resolve arguments with your landlord.

Your landlord can also contact our Landlord Advice service. Our advisers can tell them the correct steps to end the tenancy.

Going to court for eviction

If you can’t resolve the issues with your landlord and you do not leave, they can take you to court. Then, they can get a court order to make you leave.

Getting a court hearing

First, your landlord or their solicitor will send you a legal document called a Civil Bill. This is to tell you they will apply for a court order. You have 21 days to respond. After 21 days, the landlord can ask for a court hearing.

The court may allow you to stay in the property if:

- the fixed term stated on your tenancy agreement has not ended yet
- you can show that you did not break your agreement

As long as your landlord has followed the correct process, the court will order you to leave the property if:

- the fixed term stated on your tenancy agreement has ended (you’re now a periodic, or ‘month to month’ tenant)
- you never had a written tenancy agreement and rented the property for six months or more
- the court agrees you broke the agreement

The court can also order you to pay certain costs to the landlord, including:

- rent you owe
- the landlord's legal fees
- for any damage you caused

After the court orders you to leave

After the hearing, you will get a copy of the court order, called a ‘Possession Order’. This order usually includes:

- a final date to leave the property
- how much money you must pay the landlord

You should make plans to move out and get help if you do not have a place to go.

If you do not leave, the landlord cannot force you out of the property themselves. They must apply to the EJO to enforce the order. You are responsible for these

costs.

Enforcing a court order

The enforcement process starts when you get a notice from the EJO that they will enforce the court order. If you do not leave, EJO officers can legally enter your home and remove you and your belongings. It can take several weeks or months before the eviction stage, but it's best to try and sort things out as soon as you can.

You can always speak to our advisers about your situation and see what options you have.

Eviction from a protected tenancy

To end a protected tenancy:

- a landlord must show at least one ground for possession
- these grounds can be either mandatory or discretionary

Mandatory grounds for possession usually depend on the original purpose of the tenancy. For example, if before the tenancy started:

- the property was your landlord’s home and they told you they'd move back in eventually
- your landlord was in the armed forces and they told you they'd move back in eventually
- your landlord told you that they would move into the property when they retired
- the property was meant for a minister or missionary and the landlord now needs it for that purpose.

Discretionary grounds for possession are typically based on the tenant’s actions. For example, if:

- you sublet the property without your landlord’s permission
- you were your landlord’s employee and they need the property for a new employee
- the property is on agricultural land the landlord wants to sell

Your landlord must give you at least eight weeks’ notice to quit. If you lived in the property for more than 10 years, they must give you at least 12 weeks’ notice.

If you're a protected tenant and your landlord is trying to evict you, speak to our advisors or a solicitor.

More advice

- Rent arrears
- Managing your mortgage