Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice/eviction/illegal-eviction-and-harassment

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Illegal eviction and harassment

This information is for people living in Northern Ireland.

It is illegal for your landlord to evict you without proper notice or a court order. Your eviction may be illegal if your landlord:

- does not give enough notice
- changes the locks while you are out or stops you from getting into your home
- makes life so uncomfortable that you're forced to leave
- removes your belongings from the property

The Environmental Health department of your local council has the power to make sure your landlord follows the rules for eviction. Contact your local council if your landlord illegally evicted you or is threatening to.

Tell your landlord

If your landlord illegally evicted you or tried to do so, write to tell them their action is illegal. Some landlords might not know their actions are illegal. Tell them to:

- stop trying to illegally evict you
- let you back into the property
- stop harassing you
- return your belongings

Our advisers can help you talk to your landlord. You can also use our mediation services to try and work things out.

Contact your council for help with an illegal eviction

Your local council can help you with an illegal eviction. The council can:

- help you negotiate with your landlord
- take your landlord to court
- fine your landlord
- get a court order to let you back in your home

Protect your belongings

Do your best to protect your belongings if your landlord takes them and leaves them outside. You may be able to get compensated if they’re damaged.

If you passed the four homelessness tests, the Housing Executive may be responsible for storing your belongings.

As a private tenant, you might be interested in taking part in Renters' Voice. Renters' Voice is supported by Housing Rights. It's a group of people who rent privately in Northern Ireland that works to influence landlords, politicians, and government to make private renting better for everyone.

Harassment

You have a right to enjoy your home safely and peacefully. Harassment is repeated behaviour to annoy or make someone else uncomfortable, to the point that they feel they must leave. It’s illegal for your landlord to harass you.

A landlord, or someone acting on their behalf, might try and harass you to get you to leave the property.

If you think your landlord is harassing you, you can get help and advice to protect yourself and your home.

Examples of harassment

A landlord harassing you can include:

- threatening, abusive or offensive behaviour
- entering, or letting others enter, the property without your permission or notice
- letting your home fall into a state that makes living uncomfortable
- carrying out unnecessary repairs
- not finishing repairs, without good reason
- cutting off services such as water or electricity
- making you sign agreements that limit your rights

Responding to harassment

Your local council can help make sure you can live in your home safely and peacefully.
If you think your landlord is harassing you:

- save the evidence of things that happen (for example, text message, emails)
- ask your landlord to communicate only in writing
- write to your landlord asking them to stop and warn them of legal action
- contact your local council
- contact the police if you're threatened with violence

If the council does not have enough information to take your landlord to court, they can still contact and warn your landlord.

If you have a fixed term tenancy your landlord can't evict you for complaining about harassment, unless they can prove you broke your tenancy agreement. If you're near the end of your agreement, your landlord could still refuse to renew your agreement.

Licensees usually have less protection against harassment or eviction. It's easier for landlords to get permission to evict licensees. Speak to our advisers if you are a licensee and you feel that your landlord is harassing you.

More advice

- Eviction from a private tenancy
- Eviction from a social tenancy
- Kicked out of your home