

## Paying your rates bill

Rates are a property tax used to pay for public services. It is a separate bill you pay on a property either by lump sum, direct debit or in a post office. Land and Property Services (LPS) collect this money and can take legal action against you if you do not pay.

Your rates bill is based on your property's capital value and the council area you live in. It includes:

- the regional rate for Northern Ireland, decided by the NI Assembly, and
- a district rate, decided by your own council

You can [check how much your rates bill should be](#).

## Help paying rates

You can get help to pay rates from:

- [Housing Benefit](#) if you already get it or are State Pension age or older
- [Rate Rebate](#) if you get Universal Credit

## Social renters and rates

Rates are included in the charges for social tenants. They can be covered by Rate Rebate and are usually paid directly to the landlord. It can be paid to the tenant if they get a partial rebate.

## Private renters and rates

Either you or your landlord is responsible for paying rates. This depends on your tenancy agreement and the law. It is important to know who is responsible because this is the person LPS will contact and hold responsible if you fall behind or miss payments.

Your landlord is responsible for paying rates if the property:

- has a capital value of £150,000 or less, or
- is a House in Multiple Occupation

You are responsible for paying rates if:

- the property's capital value is £150,000 or more, or
- your tenancy agreement says you are responsible

Ask for proof of payments if your landlord pays rates for you.

### Check who is responsible for rates

Check your tenancy agreement to see who is supposed to pay rates. For example, your agreement may say that:

- your landlord pays rates
- rates are included in your rent
- rates are a separate charge you pay in addition to rent

[Check the capital value of your home.](#)

## Challenge your rates amount

You can challenge your rates bill by appealing your capital value if you think it's too high. You need to keep paying your rates while you appeal. You'll get a refund of any money you've overpaid if LPS agrees with your appeal.

To follow up on the appeal, you can:

- contact LPS for the initial appeal
- contact the Commissioner of Valuation at LPS if you're unhappy with the outcome of the appeal

- make a further appeal to the Northern Ireland Independent Valuation Tribunal

## Get help for rates arrears

If you do not pay rates, you can end up in arrears. This is when you owe money to LPS. If you fall behind or think you might miss a payment, [get help](#) as soon as possible. There are a lot of rules for dealing with rates arrears, but you may be able to work out a payment plan.

## Going to court for rates arrears

If you miss a rates payment, LPS will send a:

- send a reminder letter if you set up installments to pay rates – pay within seven days to keep your payment plan in place
- send a final notice if you don't pay the debt or contact LPS about your situation – pay within 10 days

You can reach out to LPS and try to work out a payment plan. If you do not pay or respond to notices, LPS issues a Process for Debt Proceedings. This is a notice with:

- how much you owe court costs and arrears
- a date for a court hearing

If you do not pay the full amount listed in the Process for Debt Proceedings before the date of your hearing, the case goes to Magistrates Court. LPS usually won't agree to a payment plan at this point. You can attend the court hearing to dispute the amount you are told to pay. Housing Rights cannot represent you at rates debt hearings.

If the judge decides you must pay, you will get a Decree with the details. Contact LPS if you want to work out a payment plan. If you do not, the case goes to the Enforcement of Judgements Office (EJO).

If you do not pay your debt or contact LPS to talk about your debt, the EJO will send a Notice of Intention. If you don't pay the full amount within 10 days:

- your credit rating will be affected

- the EJO will add extra costs

The EJO can take action to recover the debt including:

- Attachment of Earning orders – your employer deducts from your wages and pays the EJO directly
- orders Charging Land – you pay what you owe when you sell the property
- Garnishee orders – the EJO asks your bank or building society to hand over money from your account
- Seizure orders – the EJO takes some of your belongings that cover the debt

## **Bankruptcy**

LPS can start bankruptcy proceedings if you owe more than £5000. Bankruptcy proceedings are expensive. In bankruptcy, the trustee can take over your property and see it to recover your debt.

You can get free debt advice from:

- [Step Change](#)
- [Advice NI](#)

## **More advice**

- [Managing your mortgage and income](#)
- [Claiming Universal Credit](#)
- [Housing Benefit](#)