

Carrying out repairs

This information is for private landlords of properties in Northern Ireland. Tenants can find advice [here](#).

Your tenants should let you know as soon as possible when repairs are needed. You should also do regular inspections to check for signs of damage or disrepair.

This will help keep your property safe and avoid any problems getting worse.

How quickly you should carry out repairs

For most landlords, there is no set time frame for carrying out repairs. If your property is a house in multiple occupation (HMO), you should aim to deal with:

- emergency repairs in 24 hours
- urgent repairs in four working days
- routine repairs in four weeks

Keep in contact with your tenants and let them know if there are delays.

If there is serious disrepair, your tenants might need to move out temporarily to allow work to be completed.

Unless your tenancy agreement states otherwise, you're not legally obliged to provide or pay for alternative accommodation. But you can choose to provide other accommodation as a good will gesture.

Problems with disrepair

If you do not deal with disrepair quickly, tenants may become annoyed and threaten to withhold rent. Talk to your tenants and let them know the reason for any delays.

Your tenants must continue to pay rent, even if repairs are needed. Make sure your tenants are aware that not paying rent is a breach of tenancy terms and could lead to eviction.

Accessing the property

You have the right to go to the property to inspect and deal with repairs. However, you must:

- give tenants 24 hours' notice before calling or sending a tradesperson, and
- get your tenant's explicit consent to enter

If your tenant does not allow access, you cannot go into the property. [Read more about your rights to access the property.](#)

Involving the local council

Tenants can ask the council to inspect the property if there is ongoing disrepair. The council can force you to carry out repairs by a set deadline if:

- the property does not meet minimum fitness standards
- you refuse to carry out a repair that is your legal responsibility

If you cannot resolve problems with disrepair, the Housing Mediation Service may be able to help you reach an agreement with your tenant.

Damage caused by tenants

If your tenants (or their guests) have caused damage, you'll need to consider if the damage was:

- deliberate
- due to misuse or negligence
- due to normal wear and tear

Tenants are responsible for fixing damage caused deliberately or through neglect. Even if your tenant refuses to carry out these repairs, you are still responsible for ensuring the property is safe to live in.

If you repair anything your tenant has damaged, you could be entitled to recover the cost through either:

- the tenancy deposit
- small claims court, or
- by reaching an agreement with your tenant

Take photos and keep receipts as evidence of the repairs you carry out.

If your tenant has caused serious damage, this could be a breach of tenancy terms and may lead to eviction.

Contact the police if you think your tenant has caused criminal damage. If you do not report this, it could affect an insurance claim.

Using your tenant's deposit

Inspect your property for damage, disrepair or missing items at the end of the tenancy. You should also [update your inventory](#). Take photos of any damage and keep receipts for repairs you carry out that may be the tenant's responsibility.

You can deduct the cost of repairs from the tenancy deposit but you'll need to inform your tenant.

If you and your tenant cannot reach an agreement, you'll need to [raise a dispute through the deposit protection scheme](#). You'll need to give a reason and submit evidence to support the deductions you propose. Providing photos and receipts can help you to make your case.

If your tenant paid the deposit before 1 April 2013 and it's not protected, you'll need to write to your tenant and:

- list the repairs needed and costs for each repair
- explain how much money you have deducted from the deposit
- include receipts for any replacement purchases or payments to contractors
- say how and when you will return the rest of the deposit

You can make a claim to [small claims court](#) if the cost of repairs exceeds the deposit amount.

More advice

- [Disputes over tenancy deposits](#)
- [Responsibility for repairs](#)

Footnotes