

Help from the council

This information is for people living in Northern Ireland.

Do not stop paying rent, even if you're not happy with how your landlord is handling things. Your landlord could evict you.

The environmental health department of your local council is responsible for making sure your home is safe. They investigate complaints and deal with different problems, including:

- environmental issues
- noise complaints
- serious disrepair

Getting your private landlord to do repairs

Try to talk to your landlord about repairs before contacting environmental health. Contacting environmental health may lead to a risk of eviction. Often, a landlord [does not need to give a reason](#) why they want to evict a tenant. You are at a greater risk of being evicted if you have a [periodic tenancy](#).

[Our mediation service](#) may be able to help with this.

You can also [get advice](#) on repairs from our helpline.

Environmental health can help you get your private landlord to do repairs. The council will:

- ask you to complete a form to explain why the property is unfit
- decide whether to check the property
- write to you and your landlord to let you both know when they'll come
- inspect the property (called a 'fitness inspection')

The council can give your landlord:

- unofficial recommendations for the repairs they should do
- legal notices that make your landlord do repairs

Contact the council again if your landlord still does not do repairs. If the council issued a legal notice to your landlord to carry out the repair, in some cases the council can carry out the repair and charge it to the landlord.

It's important to know that contacting the council may lead to the risk of retaliatory eviction. This is where a landlord takes action to end the tenancy because a tenant has tried to enforce their rights. This can include trying to get repairs done.

[Periodic tenants](#) are at a greater risk of retaliatory eviction. This is because the landlord does not need to provide a reason to evict. They only need to follow the correct [legal process to end the tenancy](#).

[Speak with one of our advisers](#) if you are worried about contacting the council.

For noise and nuisance complaints

Environmental health is also responsible for handling noise and nuisance complaints. Before you contact the council to complain about noise, try working things out yourself if it's safe and makes sense to do so. Depending on who is making the noise, you can also talk to:

- a resident's association in your building or community – sometimes people do not realise how loud they are
- the contractors doing building work – find out when they're doing their work and how long it will go on for

Environmental health needs proof before acting. If you decide to talk to your council, keep in mind:

- you'll need to give your name and address, but the complaint will be kept anonymous

- if they ask you to monitor noise levels, they'll give you recording equipment

The council can:

- give a warning notice
- issue fines
- issue a Noise Abatement Order, which comes with a larger fine
- take away entertainment licenses from businesses making too much noise

It's best to contact environmental health when the noise is at its worst. They are specifically responsible for checking any complaints about noise at night. They may even have a nighttime noise helpline for these complaints .

For neighbourhood problems

[Speak to our advisers](#) if you reached out to environmental health and they were not able to help you.

Environmental health can investigate certain environmental issues (called '[statutory nuisances](#)').

These are problems with things like:

- rubbish building up outside your home
- drainage
- fumes and smoke
- industrial and trade waste
- overcrowded housing
- smells and noises from vehicles or machines on a street

Environmental health cannot always fix the problem, but they can ask the owner to fix the problem and issue fines. If you are responsible for the issue, environmental health will hold you responsible.

Rent controlled tenancies

Properties are rent controlled when the [Rent Officer for Northern Ireland](#) restricts how much rent a landlord can charge. It's usually because it's a protected tenancy or in a bad state.

[Check the rent register](#) to see if your home is a rent controlled property. The rent officer works out your rent based on the:

- condition of the property
- terms of the tenancy agreement
- rent the Housing Executive would charge

If your property is not on the rent register, you may be able to bring proof to the rent officer to get the rent controlled. For example, if your property should have a [certificate of fitness](#), but does not, it should be rent controlled.

Your landlord can ask the rent officer to check the property if they think the rent amount is too low. The rent officer will not include any repairs and improvements you made in their considerations.

Rent officers may review rent controlled properties from time to time to check if the rent should be increased. [Speak to our advisers](#) for help with a rent review.

Appealing controlled rent

If you think the rent officer did not work out the right amount of rent, you can write and appeal their decision.

The Department of Communities has a Rent Assessment Committee. This is the agency in charge of rent reviews. They'll review your case and the property and decide if the rent officer was correct or not.

More advice

- [Repairs for private tenants](#)
- [Repairs for social tenants](#)
- [Paying rent for bad housing](#)