Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice/repairs-and-bad-housing/paying-rent-bad-housing

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Paying rent for bad housing

This information is for people living in Northern Ireland.

It’s frustrating when your home is in poor condition, and your landlord won't fix it. You should keep paying rent even if you’re unhappy. Paying rent is a key element of your tenancy. If you don't pay rent, your landlord could evict you. You can try negotiating with your landlord to reduce your rent if you think it's too high.

Withholding rent to get repairs done

Withholding rent because repairs aren't being done is serious. If you are considering doing this, please contact our helpline for advice first.

It’s important to be sure that the repairs in question are your landlord’s responsibility, and not yours.

If you decide not to pay rent, you should:

- write to tell your landlord you will not pay rent if they do not complete repairs
- give them a date you expect to hear back from them
- write again to tell them you’re not paying rent and why
- keep copies of all the letters you send
- keep rent money in a separate bank account to show you’re not using repairs as an excuse
- on the date you would usually pay rent, give your landlord a statement from this account

If you hire someone to do the repairs, make sure you:

- give the landlord plenty of notice and a chance to do the repairs
- get at least three quotes for the work
- send the quotes to the landlord and explain you're choosing the cheapest
- keep copies of all letters you send to your landlord, and of quotes and receipts for the work

Getting help from the council

Your local council may be able to help you get your landlord to carry out repairs. This is especially the case if the disrepair makes the accommodation unfit or hazardous to health. The council's Environmental Health Department deals with disrepair and fitness standards.

Speak with our advisers if you are thinking about contacting the council.

Sometimes contacting the council can 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 asking for repairs to be done.

Unfit properties becoming rent controlled

Some properties can have their rent controlled if they are unfit to live in. Local councils can carry out a fitness inspection. They will work with the Rent Office for Northern Ireland, which decides what the rent should be.

Your home might be rent controlled if it was built before 1945 and the council issued a:

- notice of unfitness, or
- notice of refusal to issue a certificate of fitness (not all properties need this)

You can check whether your home is rent-controlled. Rent control ends if the landlord gets a certificate of fitness.

Adjustments for someone with a disability

If you or someone in your household has a disability, it may be difficult to cope. Your landlord must make reasonable adjustments to the property to help you. Reasonable adjustments can include things like:

- installing a handrail or ramp to the entrance of the property
- changing door handles
- widening a door

However, this help can be limited for private tenants. Your landlord may be exempt if the changes:

- are very expensive
- will reduce the property's value
- will make it harder to rent out the property in the future

Speak to our advisers if your landlord is not helping you with adjustments.

First letter (289.91 KB) Second letter (288 KB)

More advice

- Repairs for private tenants
- Repairs for social tenants
- Help from the council