Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice/repairs-and-bad-housing/repairs-social-tenants-0

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Repairs for social tenants

This information is for people living in Northern Ireland.

Responsibility for repairs

Your landlord is responsible for most repairs in your home. But there are some that you will have to do. Check your tenancy agreement to see who is responsible for different repairs.

Social landlord responsibilities

Social landlords are responsible for most repairs including:

Repairs outside your home

- unblocking sewers
- maintaining communal areas
- replacing rotary clothes lines
- fixing roofs, chimneys, gutters and drains
- maintaining fences or gates that they provided
- replacing wheelie bins every seven years (if needed)
- painting the outside of your home every seven years
- unblocking drains (if not caused by blocked grates)
- structural repairs to walls, paths, external doors and windows (except glass)

Repairs inside your home

- fixing structural woodwork, including staircases and dealing with rot
- replacing tiles (if the landlord installed them)
- fixing skirting boards and windowsills
- repairing internal doors and frames
- maintaining roof insulation

Health and safety repairs

- electrical wiring, sockets and switches
- electrical appliances they installed
- gas and oil boilers, pipes and radiators
- any solid fuel cooker or stove they installed
- any room heaters they provided
- fire hearths and surrounds

Your landlord will not fix anything that you have brought into the property.

Your landlord will not fix damage caused by you or your guests. If they do repair something you damaged or broke, they may charge you.

Allowing your landlord access

Social tenants are entitled to have 'quiet and peaceful enjoyment'. This means you have to give permission to anyone who wants to enter your home.

However, there may be times when your landlord will need access to your home to carry out repairs or improvement works. Allowing access is usually a part of the conditions of your tenancy. It is also in your best interests to allow them access to ensure that your home is in a safe, good condition. Access should be pre-arranged and give you enough notice.

Continuously refusing reasonable access could lead the landlord to take legal action. They could seek an injunction. An injunction is issued by the court. It can order a person to do or not do something. You may be liable for any legal costs resulting from them having to take this action.

Social tenant responsibilities

Your tenancy agreement or tenant handbook should detail the repairs that you must do. It should also explain how to report any of the above repairs to your landlord.

You're responsible for:

Repairs outside your home

- looking after your garden
- cleaning out your drains, gully traps and gratings
- replacing broken window panes

Repairs inside your home

- draughtproofing
- filling internal plaster cracks
- decorating the inside of your home
- replacing washers, plugs and stoppers
- fixing hinges, locks and handles on internal doors

Health and safety repairs

- clearing airlocks
- sweeping your chimney
- fixing plugs, fuses and doorbells
- maintaining the front piece and basket of open fires

You must also fix any appliances you install and your own furniture.

You must fix broken window glass. Your landlord might help if the police say the damage was caused by a riot or vandalism.

Basic safety standards

Your home should be safe and not put your health at risk. The law says that for a home to meet minimum fitness standards, it must have:

- working drains
- a piped drinking water supply
- an easily accessible toilet and sink
- either a bath or a shower with hot and cold water
- proper facilities for lighting, heating and ventilation
- proper space to prepare and cook food, including a sink

Your home must not:

- be in serious disrepair
- have structural problems
- have dampness, which could impact your health

Contact your landlord if you're concerned about the condition of your home.

Reporting repairs to your landlord

If you rent from the Housing Executive, you can report repairs by:

- phoning 0344 8920 901, or
- reporting repairs online

If you're a housing association tenant, contact them to report repairs.

When you report a repair, tell your landlord:

- what the problem is
- how it affects you
- if it's the first time you've reported this problem
- if the problem is damaging other parts of your home
- how to contact you to access your home

Keep track of when you reported the problem. Record the names of any people you speak to about the repair.

Getting repairs done

The Housing Executive must respond to repairs within set time frames. These depend on whether the problem needs an emergency, urgent or routine repair.

Each housing association has its own repairs policy. Look at your tenancy agreement or tenant handbook. They show how long your landlord has for

different repairs.

When you report a problem, ask your landlord what type of repair is needed. Is it an emergency, urgent, or routine?

Emergency repairs

An issue is an emergency if there is a serious risk of immediate injury or significant damage to your home. The Housing Executive must respond to emergency repair requests within 24 hours.

Issues needing emergency repair include:

- a gas leak
- electricity cuts
- bare electrical wiring
- electrical fittings coming into contact with water
- no heating in severely cold weather
- burst pipes
- burst storage tanks
- overflowing sewage
- broken external doors

It might not be safe for you to stay in your home while the Housing Executive carries out emergency repairs. If this is the case, they should offer you temporary accommodation.

Urgent repairs

A problem is urgent if it needs to be dealt with quickly, but it isn’t an emergency. The Housing Executive must reply to urgent repair requests within four days.

Issues that need urgent repair can include:

- faulty electrical fittings
- faulty electrical heating systems
- not being able to heat water
- leaking pipes
- problems with ball valves
- problems with chimney flues

- blocked sewers or drains
- leaking doors or windows
- damaged roof tiles

Routine repairs

If the problem is not an emergency or urgent, it will need a routine repair. The Housing Executive must reply to routine repair requests within four weeks.

Routine repairs include fixing things such as:

- damaged or clogged gutters
- broken doors or windows
- damaged plasterwork
- broken floors or floor tiles
- faulty internal doors or frames
- damaged kitchen fittings and work surfaces

Video: Help if your social landlord is not doing repairs

Video transcript

If you’re renting from the Housing Executive or a housing association, they have to respond to repairs within a set time frame.

How long your landlord takes to do the repair depends on how urgent it is. But we know from people contacting us that tenants often have to wait a long time for repairs.

You should keep in touch with your landlord, remind them about the problem and let them know if it gets worse.

But it can be really hard to wait for repairs in your home. There are some things you can do that might help.

The Housing Executive and most housing associations have a Right to Repair Scheme. With this scheme, you could get compensation if your landlord doesn’t

carry out an urgent repair in time

Housing Executive tenants can use the Self-help Repair Scheme to pay for routine repairs and claim the money back from their landlord.

If you want to use these schemes, you'll need to speak to your landlord first to check if the repair qualifies.

You can also contact Environmental Health or make a formal complaint to your landlord if they still don't fix the problem

Contact Housing Rights if you need to talk about problems with getting repairs done. You can call, email or chat to an adviser online.

Compensation for delayed repairs

Social landlords should carry out repairs within a reasonable timeframe. If your landlord does not do the work within a reasonable time you might be able to get compensation.

The Housing Executive and some housing associations have a Right to Repair Scheme. You could get up to £50 if your landlord delays repairs.

When you report an issue, your landlord should tell you:

- who will carry out the repair
- what date they will finish
- if the disrepair qualifies for the scheme

Types of delayed repair that qualify

The scheme includes certain types of disrepair. For Housing Executive tenants, these include issues that need emergency or urgent repairs.

For housing association tenants, most repairs involve electrical or plumbing work. But other issues needing repair can also qualify for the scheme. The scheme includes disrepair that is a landlord's responsibility to fix and:

- is a health or safety risk if not fixed quickly, or
- costs less than £250 to fix

Getting compensation

If the disrepair qualifies for the scheme, you can get compensation if:

- the work is not done by the date it should have been, and
- the delay is your landlord’s fault

Contact your landlord if they haven’t finished the repair by the deadline. Ask to use the Right to Repair Scheme.

The Housing Executive should find a new contractor and set a new 24-hour or four-day deadline. You can get compensation if the work is not done by the new deadline.

Housing associations do not have set time frames for doing repairs. You can get compensation if they do not finish the work by the date they originally agreed.

You get £10 compensation for the first day the work is late. You get another £2 per day until the work is done. The most you can get is £50.

When you cannot use the Right to Repair Scheme

Your delayed repair will not qualify if:

- it's not an emergency, urgent or a health and safety issue in your home
- you told your landlord you do not want repairs to go ahead
- you refused to let the contractor into your home
- the delay was not your landlord’s fault (for example, bad weather)

Getting reimbursed for repairs from the Housing Executive

Housing Executive tenants can pay for some repairs. They can then claim the cost back through the Self-help Repair Scheme.

You can only use this scheme if:

- you’re a Housing Executive tenant
- the repair needed qualifies for the scheme
- you have your landlord’s permission to use the scheme

The most the Housing Executive will pay under this scheme is £200. If you owe any rent or other charges, they can put this money towards your arrears instead.

Check if repairs qualify for the Self-help Repair Scheme

The Self-help Repair Scheme is designed for routine repairs. Under the Scheme, you might be able to carry out a repair even if it is one that the Housing Executive should be doing. This includes things like:

- replacing radiators, internal doors and frames
- replacing slates, front doors and gates
- repairing gutters and fences

Minor electrical and plumbing repairs are also covered by the scheme. But you must use a qualified electrician or plumber.

Before you start any work, you must get permission from the Housing Executive.

How to use the scheme

If you think the repair qualifies for the scheme, follow these steps:

1. **ask the Housing Executive for permission** to use the scheme
2. **a maintenance officer will visit** to inspect the problem and check if it qualifies for the scheme
3. **sign a form** saying how much the repair is likely to cost and how much you can claim back
4. **find a contractor** to do the repair and get a receipt when you pay them
5. **tell the Housing Executive** when the repair is done
6. **a maintenance officer will visit** to check the standard of the repair
7. **the Housing Executive will pay** you the money

If you can’t afford to pay the contractor, the Housing Executive can pay them directly. Ask about setting up a ‘mandated payment’ if you want to do this.

Housing Executive improvement schemes

The Housing Executive's improvement schemes will upgrade homes in specific areas. These schemes cover improvements such as:

- rewiring properties
- fitting new windows
- replacing kitchens or bathrooms
- replacing flat roofs with pitched roofs

- installing new heating systems – or changing from oil to gas

Usually, the Housing Executive consults with tenants about planned schemes. They'll tell you what work they plan to do and how long it will take. You can contact your local office to see if there are any planned schemes in your area.

Refusing improvements to your home

You can refuse certain improvements to your home. But you may not get another chance to get this work done.

You cannot refuse any work that is needed to comply with the law or health and safety regulations.

Moving out temporarily for improvements

You can stay in your home for most improvement schemes. But you might have to move out for major work.

The Housing Executive can find you temporary housing. Usually, this will be an empty Housing Executive property.

Depending on the level of disruption, you may be entitled to compensation.

Compensation for disruption during improvements

You can get compensation if you have to move out because of an improvement scheme. You will normally get:

- £111 when you move out, and
- £154 when you move back in

You should be able to move back home within 12 weeks. You'll get extra compensation if you have to stay in temporary housing for more than 12 weeks.

You get £33 compensation for every extra week. The most you can get is £330.

Compensation if you have to find your own temporary housing

The Housing Executive will pay a special allowance if they cannot find you suitable temporary housing and you have to find your own.

Depending on the size of your household, you'll get:

- £96 per week – one to two people
- £114 per week – three to seven people
- £136 per week – eight or more people

Compensation if you do not move out of your home

You may get compensation if you stay in your home during work that:

- went on for more than six days, and
- caused serious disruption

The amount of compensation you can get is:

- £128 for disruption lasting between six and 14 days
- an extra £33 for each extra week of disruption for a maximum of four weeks

Compensation for damage and redecoration

If your home was damaged during work, you may be able to get compensation to help with redecorating costs.

You can apply for a redecoration payment if:

- your landlord was doing work in your home, and
- they damaged your decor during this work

Contact your landlord to apply for a redecoration payment.

The amount you get depends on:

- what rooms were damaged, and
- your financial and household situation

There are two rates of payment. The higher rate is only paid if:

- you're not physically able to do the work yourself

- no one else can do the work for you, and
- you're on certain benefits

You may get a lower amount if you owe your landlord money.

Making a complaint about repairs

You can complain to your landlord if:

- they refuse to do repairs they’re responsible for
- they take a long time to carry out repairs
- you're not happy with the repair

How to make a complaint

Talk to your landlord first and explain why you’re making a complaint. Send photos or videos if these help to show the problem. Keep a note of who you spoke to and what they said.

Use your landlord’s formal complaints process if talking to them does not fix the problem.

If you're not happy with the outcome of the complaints process, you might be able to complain further:

- to the Ombudsman or
- take a judicial review, but you will need a solicitor to do that

Withholding rent while you wait for repairs

You must pay rent to your landlord. You should never withhold rent even if you are unhappy about your landlord. You should not stop paying rent to try to force your landlord to do repairs.

Your landlord can evict you if you withhold rent.

More advice

- Help from the council
- Complaining about repairs in social housing
- Paying rent for bad housing