

Repairs for social tenants

Responsibility for repairs

Your landlord is responsible for most repairs in your home. You'll have to carry out other repairs. Check your tenancy agreement to see who is responsible for different issues.

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 they provided
- replacing wheelie bins every seven years (if needed)
- painting the outside of your home every seven years
- unblocking drains (if blockage was 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

Your landlord is responsible for maintaining:

- 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 you or your guests cause. If they do repair something you damaged or broke, they may charge you.

Social tenant responsibilities

Your tenancy agreement, or tenant handbook, should explain the repairs you're responsible for. 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're also responsible for fixing any appliances you install and furniture you bring into your home.

You must fix broken glass in windows. Your landlord might help if the police say that the damage happened because of a riot or vandalism.

You should take steps to manage condensation in your property. The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) has some useful information on [dealing with condensation and mould](#).

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 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 worried about the conditions in your home.

Reporting repairs to your landlord

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

- phoning [0344 8920 901](tel:03448920901), or
- [reporting repairs online](#)

If you're a housing association tenant, contact your housing association 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.

Housing associations may have different time frames for dealing with repairs.

Emergency repairs

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

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 respond to requests for urgent repairs within four days of reporting.

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 respond to requests for routine repairs within four weeks of reporting.

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

Each housing association has its own repairs policy. Check your tenancy agreement or tenant handbook to find out how long your landlord should take to carry out different types of repairs.

When you report a problem, ask your landlord to tell you which type of repair is needed: emergency, urgent or routine.

Compensation for delayed repairs

Social landlords should carry out repairs within a reasonable amount of time. If your landlord does not carry out certain repairs in a reasonable amount of 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 in time. 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 certain repairs and claim the cost back using 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 maximum 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

You may be able to use the Self-help Repair Scheme for routine repairs that the Housing Executive is responsible for fixing. 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 also qualify for 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 finished
6. **a maintenance officer will visit** to check the repair was done properly
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 plans improvement schemes to 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

Contact your local Housing Executive office to check if there are any improvement schemes planned for your area.

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.

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 get compensation if you have to move out because of an improvement scheme. You 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 and 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 room or 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.

Withholding rent while you wait for repairs

You must pay rent to your landlord. Even if you're unhappy about a problem in your home, 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](#)