Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/housing-advice/eviction/abandonment-social-tenancy

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Abandonment of a social tenancy

This information is for people living in Northern Ireland.

Abandonment of a social tenancy

The property you rent from your landlord must be your main or only home.

If your landlord has reason to believe you are living somewhere else, they can end your tenancy. This is called ‘abandonment’.

Your landlord can suspect you abandoned your property, if:

- the property appears empty
- they visit a few times and you’re not there
- someone tells them you’re living somewhere else

How a social landlord deals with abandonment

If your landlord thinks you abandoned the property, they’ll:

- put an abandonment notice on the property
- give you four weeks to respond
- give you notice to quit if they do not hear from you

If you did not abandon the tenancy, contact your landlord as soon as possible and explain why the property looked abandoned. Bring proof, such as utility bills, to show you were living there.

If your landlord still decides to end your tenancy, they do not need to get a court order. They can go into the property and remove your belongings. They can give

your property to another tenant.

Appealing an abandonment decision

You can go to court to appeal your landlord's decision to end your tenancy. You must do this within six months of your tenancy ending.

You'll need to prove that you:

- were still living in your home, or
- had a genuine reason for being away and planned to return

If the court believes you, it can order your landlord to:

- restart your tenancy, or
- give you a tenancy in a different property

Speak to our advisers if you want to appeal an abandonment decision.

Dealing with belongings in an abandoned tenancy

Your landlord must store any items you left in the property for six months. They must write to you to explain that:

- they are storing your belongings
- you must collect the items on a specific date
- you are responsible for the cost of storing the items

Your landlord can sell any items you left behind if you do not claim them within six months. They can throw away anything in such poor condition that it would not sell.

Finding another home after your tenancy was abandoned

It can be hard to get help from the Housing Executive if you are homeless after abandoning a social tenancy. The Housing Executive may say that you are

‘intentionally’ homeless. This means they do not have to help you find a home.

Speak to our advisers if you are in this situation.

More advice

- Eviction from a social tenancy
- Ending your social tenancy
- Changing your tenancy