Housing Rights

https://www.housingrights.org.uk/landlords/preparing-rent/tenancy-paperwork

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Tenancy paperwork

This information is for private landlords of properties in Northern Ireland.

If you are a tenant, you can find advice here.

If you are a landlord or letting agent in Northern Ireland seeking advice, you can:

- send a message to Landlord Advice, or
- call 028 90 245 640 (Option 1)

Once you've found tenants, you'll need to get documents ready to confirm the tenancy details. Some of these documents must be given to tenants within 28 days of the tenancy starting.

Ensure you are aware of the necessary certificates and safety checks. You'll need to give your tenants copies of some of these documents.

Tenancy information notice

From 1 April 2023, the law requires you to give tenants a tenancy information notice. You must give this notice to the tenant within 28 days of granting the tenancy. Granting means the date on which you and the tenant agree to the tenancy or sign a tenancy agreement.

A tenancy information notice must contain specific information, including the:

- tenant's name(s)
- rental property address
- landlord's name, address, email address and phone number

- name, address and phone number of the letting agent (if any)
- amount of rent and rates the tenant must pay
- period covered by each rent payment
- amount and purpose of any other payment (for example, utilities)
- date the tenancy starts

You can use the Department for Communities' template tenancy information notice. You cannot charge a fee for providing a notice.

Not providing a tenancy information notice within 28 days is an offence. Environmental health may take legal action against you, and they could fine you.

Landlords no longer need to provide their tenants with a rent book.

Notice of variation

There may be times when the contents of the tenancy information notice changes. For example, your contact details. If this happens, you must give your tenant a 'notice of variation'. You must provide this notice within 28 days of the change.

You can use the notice to tell your tenant that your phone number or email address has changed.

You can also use a notice of variation if you are going to change the rent. You must follow the correct process for increasing rent.

You can use the Department for Communities' notice of variation template.

It is best practice to give your tenants at least 28 days' notice before making any changes to the tenancy. But if you have a fixed-term contract, the terms are set for its duration. You cannot make significant changes until it is time to renew the agreement.

Increasing rent from 1 April 2025

From 1 April 2025, you must give your tenant at least three months’ notice of any rent increase.

You must **follow the correct process for increasing rent**.

You can also only increase the rent once every 12 months, regardless of what type of tenancy you have.

Deposit protection confirmation

Within 28 days of taking the deposit, you must protect it in a deposit protection scheme.

Within 35 days of taking the deposit, you must give written proof that the deposit is protected. You must give the tenant ‘prescribed information’ which must include:

- the deposit amount and rental property address
- the landlord or estate agent contact details
- the deposit protection scheme contact details
- how the deposit will be returned and when deductions can be made
- how to use the deposit protection scheme’s dispute resolution service
- what happens if a tenant does not engage with the landlord about a deposit dispute

Guarantor agreement

If you want your tenant to provide a guarantor, you will need a contract between you and the guarantor. The contract must be clear about the guarantor's liabilities. It must set out what happens if the tenant breaches the tenancy agreement.

It should include the:

- names of the tenant, landlord and guarantor
- rental property address
- start and end date of the tenancy
- amount of rent due
- terms of the guarantee
- obligations of the guarantor

In the case of joint tenants, it must state if there is 'joint and several' liability.

Changes to the tenancy agreement will make the guarantor contract invalid unless:

- guarantor agreement states it will continue despite such changes, or
- guarantor agrees in writing to the change(s)

Inventory

It’s in your interest to complete an inventory at the start and end of a tenancy. This helps prevent disputes over deposits.

When completing the inventory, you should:

- inspect the property with the tenant
- record the condition and cleanliness of every item
- be specific and avoid vague terms such as ‘some damage’
- give tenants the chance to see the inventory and make necessary changes
- ensure that you and the tenant sign the inventory and each keep a copy

If your tenant causes damage, it’s not enough to provide photos of the damaged item to claim from the deposit.

You need to provide clear evidence to show you're entitled to keep some of the deposit. If you are unable to do this, the full deposit will be returned to your tenant.

The Department for Communities has a free inventory template which you can use.

More advice

- Setting up a tenancy
- Finding tenants