

Dealing with harassment

In this factsheet we suggest what you can do if you are experiencing harassment from your landlord or her/his agent.

Harassment can be something that disrupts your life at home or can even be actions intended to make you leave. If your landlord (or anyone acting on her/his behalf) is harassing you, or anyone else in your home, you may be able to get help from the council, or take your landlord to court. The fact that your landlord owns your home does not give her/him a right to harass you.

Harassment of tenants can take many forms, for example:

- disconnection of the electricity or gas supply
- entering your home/room without your permission, especially late at night
- threats or violence of any kind
- harassing you because of your gender, race or sexuality
- opening your mail
- 'confiscating' your belongings
- beginning disruptive repair work and not finishing it.

Practical steps

There are a number of steps you can take, for example:

- ask your landlord to stop the behaviour
- keep a diary and/or take photographs of what happens
- ask your landlord to put all communication with you in writing
- write to your landlord, saying if the harassment continues you will take legal action
- have someone with you as a witness whenever you see your landlord
- speak with other tenants who have the same landlord, they might have the same problem especially where you share accommodation
- go to an advice centre, the council, or a solicitor for help.

Any records you keep will be useful evidence if you have to take further action. Taking

action may provoke the landlord to take steps to evict you – this is something you must weigh up if you have little security of tenure, for example if you have an assured shorthold tenancy.

Going to the council or the police

Every council should have someone who can advise you. Some councils employ a 'tenancy relations officer' (TRO), whose job it is to help tenants experiencing harassment or illegal eviction. It often helps to involve the council at an early stage. The council can contact your landlord to mediate on your behalf. They can ensure your landlord is aware of your rights, that action they are taking may be unlawful, and they may successfully persuade the landlord to stop harassing you (an advice service can also do this). In some cases the council will prosecute the landlord.

Although harassment can be a criminal offence, it can be difficult to get the police to help you. There is often some confusion about the law, and what responsibilities the police have. However, they will usually agree to come to the property to prevent a breach of the peace from taking place.

Taking your landlord to court

The council or police can prosecute a landlord in the magistrates' or Crown (criminal) courts. You can take action yourself against your landlord in your local county (civil) court. You can use the county court to get an injunction to stop the harassment and/or to get damages as compensation for your landlord's actions. You will normally need a solicitor to help you.

Further advice

You can get further advice from Shelter's free* housing advice helpline (0808 800 4444), a local Shelter advice service or Citizens Advice bureau, or by visiting shelter.org.uk/advice

* Calls are free from UK landlines and main mobile networks.



Specialist support on housing advice

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