

Reporting repairs

In this factsheet we suggest what you can do if you are a tenant and you have a repair problem. Another factsheet will give you a brief guide to the action you can take if your landlord does not carry out the necessary repair work.

A landlord is responsible for dealing with most disrepair in a property rented to a tenant. However, the landlord does not become responsible until s/he knows about it, unless the problem is in a common part of a building (such as a lift or a common entrance). Reporting the problem in the correct way and gathering evidence will help get the repair dealt with and will pay dividends if there are problems later on.

Landlord's responsibility

The landlord's responsibility includes repairing the roof, walls, windows, external doors, water pipes, basins, sinks, toilets and baths, drains and guttering, and central heating and gas fires (unless you installed them). The landlord is not required to repair any damage caused by anyone in your household, or any guests.

Report the problem

If you notice anything wrong with the property, such as a damp patch on the wall or a crack in the ceiling, report the problem to your landlord, your landlord's agent, or your housing officer as soon as possible, even if you're not that bothered about getting it fixed.

Reporting problems is often a condition of many tenancy agreements. Don't wait until the problem gets really bad – it might end up costing more to put right. If you are a private tenant and you fail to report a problem promptly, your landlord may try to take money out of your deposit when you leave.

Put it in writing

It is always best to report any disrepair problems in writing. By all means tell your landlord in person or by phone, but follow it up with a letter. Date your letter and keep a copy. This way, if you have problems getting your landlord to do the work, you can at least prove s/he was aware of the problem.

Time to do the work

This depends on the type of repairs needed. There are no fixed time limits, but repairs should be carried out within a reasonable time. Certain repairs, such as blocked drains,

should be carried out urgently. Social landlords sometimes provide target times in tenancy agreements or tenants' handbooks; these give a strong indication of what constitutes a reasonable time.

Access

You must allow your landlord access to the property so they can assess how much work is needed and to carry out the repairs. They should give you reasonable notice (usually at least 24 hours) before coming round, unless it's an emergency.

Evidence

Most landlords do carry out repairs once they know about them. However, if the landlord is not carrying out necessary repairs and you are considering taking further action, try to collect all the evidence you can about the necessary repairs, and what you have done to get your landlord to carry them out. You could:

- take photographs
- keep belongings that have been affected (eg, clothes damaged by dampness), or take photographs of them. Work out how much they are worth or keep receipts if you have had to replace them
- get an environmental health officer from the council to inspect your home
- keep copies of any letters you send to your landlord, and any written response you have received from him/her
- make a note of any conversations you have with your landlord – include dates, and keep a record of what was agreed
- If your health has been affected by the problem, keep copies of any doctor's notes or hospital reports.

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

A Shelter and Citizens Advice service. DCLG funded.



Registered charity number 279057.

Shelter

Registered charity in England and Wales (263710) and in Scotland (SC002327).