



Tenants Handbook

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Foreword

Cork County Council is pleased to provide you with a copy of the tenant handbook. As your landlord we are taking this opportunity to introduce you to, or remind you of, the wide range of services available to our tenants.

The handbook is also intended to clarify the responsibilities, both of Cork County Council as the landlord, and you as the tenant.

The handbook is intended as a guide and does not go into detail about every aspect of the services available. In addition to the handbook, there are a range of leaflets and annual publications available for your information.

For your convenience I have provided a list of contact telephone numbers, including emergency numbers, which are included in the Introduction to this handbook.

We are committed to consulting with you on matters affecting your tenancy with us. If you require any further information please don't hesitate to contact the staff of the Housing Department who will always be pleased to assist you.

Please keep this copy in a safe place in your home as you may be asked to refer to it when making enquiries with the Housing Department.

Cork County Council welcomes you as a tenant and wishes you and your family well in your home.

Yours Sincerely,



Mary Ryan,
Director of Services, Housing
Cork County Council.

APRIL 2016



Introduction

Cork County Council, as your Landlord, is pleased to present you with a copy of your Tenant's Handbook.

This handbook marks an important link in the chain of communication between landlord and tenant, and is part of Cork County Council's continuing commitment to improving our services to you, our tenant. It is also a reminder of our respective responsibilities and rights; ours as landlord, and yours as tenant; and should serve as a means of ensuring a successful partnership between us both, for the duration of your tenancy.

The handbook also suggests ways in which you and your neighbours might get involved in activities in your area to improve your living environment.

We hope that the information in this handbook, and the contact points it outlines, will prove useful to you as a user of Cork County Council's services – particularly in relation to your tenancy.

We want to make sure that there is a two way flow of information and we endeavour to provide a comprehensive customer service for this purpose.

We can be contacted at:

Divisional Operations (Housing) South Cork, County Hall Cork

General NumberTel (021) 4276891

Maintenance/Repair requestsTel (021) 4285302

Divisional Operations (Housing) North Cork, Council Offices, Annabella, Mallow Co. Cork

General NumberTel (022) 21123

Maintenance/Repair requestsTel (022) 30469

Divisional Operations (Housing) West Cork, Council Offices, Kent Street, Clonakilty Co. Cork.

General NumberTel (023) 8833328

Maintenance/Repair requestsTel (023) 8863728

Housing Rents Section (Countywide) based at Council Offices, Kent Street, Clonakilty, Co. Cork – Tel (023) 8833328

You can call without appointment to the Housing Department, Public Offices during opening hours, as follows:

North (10am to 4pm)

South (10am to 4pm)

West (9am to 5pm)

Website: www.corkcoco.ie

Email: housing@corkcoco.ie



Essential Contact Numbers

Garda, Fire Brigade, Ambulance	999 (or 112)
Garda Confidential Freefone	1800 666 111
Southdoc.....	1850 335 999
Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)	0761 07 2090
Citizens Information Centre.....	0761 07 6950
Childline (freefone).....	1800 66 66 66
Parentline (Parents under Stress)	1890 92 72 77
Samaritans	(021) 4271323
Alcoholics Anonymous	021 4500481
Gambler's Anonymous	01 8721133
Aware	01 6617211
ESB Networks.....	1850 372 999
Bord Gais (24 Hour Emergency).....	1850 20 50 50

Garda Stations

Ballincollig	021 4871222
Clonakilty District HQ	023 8821570
Cobh	021 4908530
Fermoy Divisional HQ	025 82100
Kinsale	021 4779250
Macroom District HQ	026 20590
Mallow District HQ	022 31450
Midleton District HQ	021 4621550
Skibbereen.....	028 23088
Youghal	024 92200
Togher HQ.....	021 4947120
Bandon Divisional and District HQ	023 8852200
Anglesea Street Divisional & District HQ.....	021 4522000
Dunmanway.....	023 8856120
Schull.....	028 28111
Skibbereen	028 23088
Bantry.....	027 20860
Castletownbere	027 70002
Mayfield District HQ	021 4558517
Gurrabraher District HQ	021 4946207

Divisional or District HQ offices are ordinary Garda Stations as well.



Tenancy Conditions

The Letting Agreement

When you become a tenant of Cork County Council, we give you the right to occupy the property as your home. By signing your Letting Agreement, a legal relationship is established between you and Cork County Council. The Letting Agreement sets out the terms under which you occupy the property.

It is an important document so you should read it carefully and keep it safe.

Both the tenant and Cork County Council sign the Letting Agreement, and this sets out our obligations to each other and other residents in your community.

For your convenience, the main points are summarised below.

How does my Tenancy operate?

- The dwelling must be used as your main home
- You must not, save with the consent of the Council, cease to reside in your dwelling for more than six weeks in any period of fifty two weeks
- The dwelling must not be used for business purposes of any kind
- Rent must be paid in full every week in advance
- You must give us full details of income and household circumstances when requested and notify Cork County Council of any changes in your household income.
- Depending on the unit you are allocated a maximum of 2 domestic pets may be allowable and these must be kept under control
- You must give at least 4 weeks written notice when surrendering the tenancy.
- You must look after the dwelling properly
- You must not make alterations to it without our permission
- Authorised officers and Contractors working for the Council must be allowed to enter and inspect the dwelling at reasonable times or to carry out necessary work
- You must not take in lodgers or sub-tenants or subdivide the house for any other purpose.
- You must take responsibility for all internal decoration, any glass breakage in windows or damage to fixtures, fittings and other items listed in your agreement.
- In relation to your neighbours and your estate, you agree that you and any member of your household including visitors will not enter into any behaviour that may cause nuisance, disturbance or annoyance to your neighbours. This means that no member of your household shall be the cause of, nor involved in any anti-social behaviour such as criminal activity,



violent or threatening behaviour, harassment or abuse, disturbance through litter or noise pollution etc.

Tenants evicted for breach of these conditions will be regarded as having deliberately rendered themselves homeless and will not be re-housed.

It is vital that you move into your home immediately.

What if my partner joins me after I sign the letting agreement?

If your household changes, and another person moves in, you will need to inform us and obtain the approval of the Council because it may have an impact on your household income and the amount of rent you pay.

What happens to the tenancy if my parents are the named tenants of my home, and they die?

If you are a son or daughter of the tenant(s), and have been living as a declared occupant in the house for at least two years immediately prior to your parents' death, as your own normal place of residence, the tenancy may pass to you if the property is deemed suitable for your family size.

Notwithstanding the above the Council may reduce this time in certain circumstances, at the discretion of the Director of Services. In determining succession, Cork County Council will have regard to the housing need and natural rights of surviving brothers, sisters, sons and daughters who have resided in the household for a period of two years or more. Each case will be examined on its merits.

Can I apply for a Transfer?

Tenants of the Council, including tenants of dwellings provided under the Social Housing Leasing Initiative, RAS, HAP, or by AHB's may apply for consideration for a transfer to other dwellings, under the following circumstances -

- a. overcrowding;
- b. where older persons and other households wish to move to smaller accommodation (downsizing);
- c. medical/compassionate reasons;
- d. on grounds of being a victim of Anti Social Behaviour if proved where the Council's Estate Management Unit **and** An Garda Síochána support the transfer application;
- e. other exceptional circumstances.
- f. To facilitate incremental purchase, where the Council has consented to such a purchase.



Will Cork County Council always agree to a transfer application?

The Council will facilitate a transfer request if deemed valid and necessary. All transfer requests are dependent on your existing property being in a suitable condition for immediate re-letting and free from any arrears with a satisfactory record of regular payments.

Notwithstanding the above, tenants seeking a transfer must fulfil the following requirements to the satisfaction of the housing authority –

- hold tenancy in their present dwelling, for a period of at least two years,
- clear rent account – any transfer will take account of rent arrears but allowances may be made where an agreement is in place, and being adhered to by the tenant to address any such arrears over an agreed period of time;
- have kept their dwelling in satisfactory condition, subject to inspection;
- have complied with the conditions of their Tenancy Agreement and
- have no record of Anti-Social Behaviour.

In the case of emergency or exceptional medical/compassionate grounds, the Council may forgo any or all of the above conditions in granting a transfer of tenancy.

Where a tenant is granted a transfer, the tenants involved must accept their new dwellings in its existing condition. The existing property must be returned to Cork County Council in an acceptable condition and no rubbish or waste materials must be left behind.

Anti Social Behaviour

Tenants or members of their household who engage in Anti Social Behaviour will not be considered for transfers and may in fact be evicted by the Local Authority. (Also see Section 6 on Estate Management).

As per Section 5.26 (t) of the letting agreement: the Tenant must not cause or commit or allow any Member of the Tenant's Household or any person visiting the Premises or the housing estate within which the Premises at the Tenant's invitation to cause or commit any form of nuisance or engage in conduct likely to cause nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to any other tenants, members of their households, visitors, neighbours, the Council including its employees and contractors or any other member of the general public living or working in the vicinity of the Premises. For the purpose of this Agreement the phrase 'nuisance, annoyance or disturbance' is any behaviour which interferes with the peace and comfort of, or which causes or is likely to cause offence, danger, injury, damage, loss or fear and, without prejudice to the foregoing, includes (but is not limited to)



- harassment on the grounds of age, gender, sex, appearance, race, colour, ethnic origin, national origin, religion, culture, lifestyle, sexual orientation, medical health, marital status, disability, family circumstances or otherwise
- violence or threats of violence to any person
- the manufacture, production, preparation, importation, exportation, sale, supply, possession for the purposes of sale or supply, or distribution of a controlled drug (within the meaning of the Misuse of Drugs Acts, 1977 and 1984),
- intimidation, coercion or obstruction of any person
- abusive or insulting words or behaviour
- offensive drunkenness
- damage or threat of damage to property belonging to another person including damage to any part of a person's home
- writing graffiti and in particular graffiti which is abusive threatening or insulting
- making unnecessary or excessive noise by any means whatsoever including arguing, shouting, door slamming, using equipment or machinery
- using or allowing the Premises to be used for prostitution and or for keeping, dealing in or the illegal use of any controlled drugs and or for keeping of unlicensed firearms or ammunition
- using the Premises for the handling or storage of stolen property
- any nuisance or annoyance caused by pets including barking and fouling;
- any nuisance or annoyance caused by obstruction of common area, doorways, other entrances and exits, pavements.
- playing any games which may cause a nuisance close to another person's property.

Ordinarily a tenant deemed by the Council to be engaged in anti-social behaviour will be served with a Statutory "Tenancy Warning Letter" as prescribed under Section 7 of the Housing Act 2014. The Tenancy Warning Letter may have been preceded by less formal warnings. Failure by a tenant to adhere to the requirements set out in the Tenancy Warning letter to immediately cease the anti-social behaviour may result in the Council initiating repossession proceedings against the tenant in the District Court. In circumstances of very serious anti-social behaviour, the Council may dispose of the necessity to issue the statutory letter.

In the event that the Council is successful in its application to repossess the dwelling to which the tenancy agreement pertains, the tenant may be liable for the costs of such an action. A tenant has a right to review a Tenancy Warning Letter should they feel aggrieved and believe the serving of same to be without merit or should they wish to challenge the factual basis of the Tenancy Warning Letter.



Housing Maintenance and Repairs

If you need to log a maintenance/repair request with the Council, you should ring the relevant Contact Number on Page 4.

What type of repairs am I responsible for?

In general terms, Cork County Council takes responsibility for the repair and maintenance of items affecting the structure of our properties and tenants are responsible for other issues, including any and all alterations and additions carried out to the property by themselves.

If there are repairs that need to be carried out to your home, you should first check whether it is your responsibility to carry out the repair. The tenant shall be charged for any unnecessary call-outs for inspection of items that are actually the tenant's responsibility. If the particular item is the Council's responsibility you should report it to the Council. We will attend to your request as soon as possible. However, in the interest of providing an improved housing maintenance service, repairs are categorised as follows:

Category	Example
Emergency	These are repairs carried out where there is a possible danger to human life e.g. smoking fuseboard, faulty sockets.
Urgent	These are repairs carried out quickly to avoid damage to the dwelling e.g. leaking pipes, no water in hot tap, leaking roof.
Routine	These are medium priority repairs e.g. plastering jobs, downpipes and gutters, external windows and doors.

Will the Council carry out any repairs that I request?

No. A clear division of repair responsibility between the Council and its tenants has been defined.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of the main types of repairs that are the responsibility of the Council, and the tenant under the Tenancy Agreement:

The Council's Responsibilities

The Council shall ensure that, any project/ works/ construction/ maintenance/ repairs to the dwelling, which arise in accordance with its responsibilities under the



Letting Agreement, and performed upon its discretion, are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013. A copy of these Regulations is available on the following website:

http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Legislation/New_Legislation/SI_291_2013.pdf

The Council is generally responsible for the repair and maintenance of the items affecting the structure of our properties such as those listed below, when it is as a result of normal wear and tear. Please note this list is non-exhaustive.

Structure of the Dwelling

- Roofs (including tiles / slates, ridge cappings and barges).
- External portion of chimney & cappings, fascia and soffits.
- External walls and ceilings of dwelling (including plastering, rendering & blockwork / brickwork), window frames and sashes which are in need of replacement.
- External doors & door frames excluding door handles, locks and letterboxes.
- Serious internal dampness due to issues with the fabric of the dwelling and not by inappropriate use of the building e.g. blocking vents or drying clothes indoors with no ventilation, etc.
- Repair and maintenance of gutters and down pipes.

Electrical Repairs

- Electrical wiring
- Repairs to sockets, light switches, showers (other than showers installed by the tenant), fuse boards.

Plumbing Repairs

- Water storage tanks
- Repairs of stopcocks, back boilers and hot water cylinders
- Taps
- External waste pipes and drains.
- Toilet bowls and cisterns, cracked or leaking 'through normal wear and tear'.

Cooking and Heating Appliances

- Repair and / or replacement of immersion heaters.

Please note all Cork County Council staff and agents of Cork County Council have identification, and you should ask to see this before allowing access to your home.



The Tenant's Responsibilities:

The tenant shall ensure, that any project/ works/ construction/ maintenance/ repairs to the dwelling which arise in accordance with the Tenant's responsibilities under the Letting Agreement, or otherwise, and which are carried out by the Tenant personally, or by a Third Party/Contractor, are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013.

A copy of these Regulations is available on the following website:

http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Legislation/New_Legislation/SI_291_2013.pdf

You should make yourself familiar with the contents of your letting agreement, particularly Schedule 1.

Internal Repairs:

The tenant is responsible for repairs which include:

- Internal door locks, hinges and handles
- Internal plaster cracks
- Repairs to kitchen units, cupboards, wardrobes including their handles, doors, locks and hinges not caused by fair wear and tear
- Cleaning of chimney which should be undertaken at a minimum once a year
- Damage to the house, fire grates and backs and all internal decoration, draught excluders including all glazing, sanitary ware, external boundary fencing and downpipes
- Repairs arising from condensation damage
- Internal woodwork such as floors, doors, door frames, windows, skirting, architraves, window boards
- Wall and floor tiles, floor coverings and vent covers

Windows and Doors

Windows should be opened at regular intervals to allow for ventilation and circulation of air. The tenant is responsible for repairs to windows and doors which include:

- Damage to windows and doors, which is not due to fair wear and tear
- Draught proofing
- If any of your windowpanes should be broken, you are responsible for replacing them.
- External and internal door locks, hinges and handles
- Replacement of broken glass, internal tiles on window sills and boards, letter boxes, window stays, catches and restrictors, painting or treated timber work on windows and external doors (at least once every two years), all internal decoration including painting and any damage to the fixtures and fittings of the house. Where such damage is made good by Cork County Council, the tenant will be liable for the cost and will reimburse the Council immediately.
- Control of condensation



Plumbing

The tenant is responsible for:

- Cleaning of gully traps and replacement of trap cover.
- Internal waste pipes, toilet bowls, cisterns and toilet seat replacement
- Replacement of wash hand basins, stopper and chain for baths and sinks
- Venting air locks in the central heating system.
- Clearing a blocked house drain where a dwelling is served by a single drain and the apportioned cost of clearing a combined drain. Please note that the flushing of non-bio degradable material (i.e. wipes and nappies etc.) down the toilets and drains of your premises is strictly prohibited. Any problems that are associated with flushing a non-bio degradable material will result in the tenant being charged with the call out charge and repair of same.

External works

The tenant is responsible for:

- Maintenance and upkeep of footpaths, gardens and hedges
- Repairs to, or replacement of, fences and garden boundary walls erected by the Council and / or by the Tenant
- Repairs to, or replacement of, and re-erection of front gates or side gates or doors leading to garden area
- Maintenance of fuel sheds or outhouses where provided
- Repair of damage to external wall finishes

Electrical

The tenant is responsible for the replacement of light bulbs, fuses, light tubes, lampshades and worn plugs, burglar alarm systems and replacement of batteries in battery operated smoke detectors.

You should not interfere with mains fuses or electrical fittings i.e. sockets, switches, ceiling roses or electric storage heaters without the written consent of the Council.

You will be responsible for any repairs arising from interference with an electrical installation.

The tenant is responsible for provision and maintenance of adequate fire detection equipment.

The tenant is to ensure that a qualified and competent electrical contractor carries out all household electrical installations and authorised repairs.

Main fuses are the responsibility of the ESB.



The tenant is responsible for solid fuel, gas and other heating/cooking appliances installed by the tenant, the grate in all fireplaces, damage to heaters through improper use, repair and replacement of fireplace or hearth tiles and the annual maintenance of all appliances they have installed themselves.

Permission for Works including but not confined to Satellite Dishes/ T.V. Aerials

Any alterations to the house, including the installation of a satellite dish must have prior written approval of the Council and may in certain instances require planning permission. The tenant is responsible for cost of repair for any damage caused to roof tiles due to the installation of a satellite dish or television aerial.

Must I insure the dwelling?

The structure of the dwelling is the responsibility of Cork County Council and the contents of the dwelling are the responsibility of the tenant and should be insured by the tenant.

Am I responsible for the Garden, or just the dwelling itself?

The tenant is responsible for both front and back gardens, where applicable. You are also responsible for the maintenance of walls, gardens, gates and fences. In addition, you must make sure that you look after your home and garden in a responsible manner. Under the Litter Act, each householder is obliged to keep the footpath and garden adjoining their property free of litter.

Refuse must be stored appropriately for collection and collected by a registered collector.

Can I make alterations to my dwelling?

You can make minor alterations, provided you get our written permission. You must obtain the permission before you commence the work. We wouldn't refuse permission to make alterations or carry out work without good reason, which we will explain to you in full. **All alterations must be approved in advance by Cork County Council.**

Examples of alterations:-

- Installing showers, fitted kitchen units, bedroom units or bathroom fittings or changing any of these.
- Moving or changing radiators.
- Changing your windows.
- Erecting a garden shed or fence.
- Building or changing boundary walls or fencing.



- Painting the exterior of your house.

This list is not exhaustive, so it is always best to check with us. You should also note that if the work you want to do will make the property less safe, reduce its value, or require planning permission, we are unlikely to agree to the proposed alteration.

What if I lock myself out of my Property ?

If this happens, the Housing Maintenance staff will help you to get back in, but we will have to charge for the service, including any damage that results. You should arrange to have extra keys cut yourself, but if you subsequently vacate the house, you must hand all keys over to Cork County Council.

Useful Tips for Tenants

- Don't put cooking oil, fat or motor oil down sinks or toilets.
- Don't put nappies, towels, kitchen cloth, paper or any other object other than toilet paper into toilets. If a toilet or sewer blockage is found to have been caused by foreign objects a charge will apply.
- Fit your waste outlet pipe with a mesh filter.
- Know the location of your mains water stopcock.
- Know how to shut off electricity in your house.
- Fit a lagging jacket to your hot water cylinder, if not already provided.

General Maintenance

- The tenant is responsible for the repair of any wilful or malicious damage to the dwelling by any person. If the Council undertakes repairs resulting from such damage, the full cost of such repairs will be charged to the tenant.
- Any breaches of Tenancy (including rent arrears) may result in the withdrawal of maintenance services.
- The Council may from time to time, in the interest of safety and for the protection of their property, repair an item that is the tenant's responsibility and shall charge the tenant the cost of the repair.
- In any circumstance under which the Council carries out repairs to an item, which is the tenant's responsibility, a charge will apply.

The Council will consider requests to undertake 'tenant responsibility repairs' where exceptional circumstance such as old age, infirmity or disability make it impossible for the tenant to do so. If you are a Pensioner and you are unable to look after your home, you can contact the Housing Department for more information and assistance.

Advice in Case of Severe Freezing Conditions

During severe prolonged freezing conditions frost penetrates deep into the ground and householders may experience problems due to frozen water pipes.



The two most common sources of the problem are:-

- Either a service pipe between the watermain and the house, which because of the depth at which it has been laid, has frozen, or
- A pipe in an attic has frozen.

Because of the diverse nature of each individual case, it is not feasible to give “one size fits all” advice. Tenants experiencing problems with frozen pipes are advised to contact Cork County Council.

Tips which might help to avoid frozen pipes are:-

- Wrap a towel/blanket around an outside tap.
- Open the attic trap door to allow heat into the attic
- Leave a light on in the attic.
- Leave heating on longer than normal.

In the longer term, when the thaw sets in, some of the frozen pipes may have burst and may need repair. With this in mind, householders should now familiarise themselves with the location of their external and internal stopcocks, ensure there is access to both stop cocks and know how to turn both off.

Early action to turn off water will reduce the potential for damage, particularly from burst pipes in the attic, however in the case of backboiler heating only, water should not be turned off.

A Safety Message from Bord Gáis:

Care must be taken with all fuels in the home. Natural Gas appliances should be fitted by a Registered Gas Installer, used in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions and serviced annually. Natural Gas is a clean, pure fuel. For safety, it has a smell.

Carbon monoxide alarms

The provision and maintenance of carbon monoxide alarms is the responsibility of the tenant.

If you smell GAS at Home.....

- Don’t use a phone in the immediate area of the leak, use a neighbour’s or call from outside.
- If you smell gas on the street, telephone Bord Gais. Don’t assume someone else has reported the smell.
- Going on holidays? Make sure your gas appliances are turned off. However, in very cold weather your central heating boiler can be left operating at a low setting in order to prevent water pipes from freezing.
- **CALL BORD GAIS 24 HOUR EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SERVICE
1850 20 50 50**



- **IF YOU CAN'T GET THROUGH, DIAL 999**

In the interest of public safety all emergency calls are recorded.

- Ensure gas appliances haven't been left on and unlit
- Don't smoke or use a naked flame
- Don't unplug or switch anything electrical on or off
- Open windows and doors to let the gas disperse
- If your appliances are off but the smell persists turn off gas at the meter

If you require a meter box key call 1850 200 694

Litter and Environment

Under the Housing Acts and as part of the Council's Estate Management Policy and Tenancy Agreement, tenants are expected to keep their rented house in good condition and keep their gardens in a clean, tidy and sanitary state.

Under the Litter Pollution Act 1997 fines can be issued by the Council's Litter Warden to tenants if they "deposit any substance or object so as to create litter in a public place or in any place".

Under this Act it is also illegal to engage in open burning of waste. Incidents of illegal dumping or open burning of refuse should be reported to the Litter Warden at the Council Offices.

Under no circumstances should domestic refuse or refuse of any kind be allowed to accumulate on Council property, except for refuse awaiting collection.

Disposal of Household Refuse.

Proper disposal of domestic and non-domestic refuse is the responsibility of the tenant. It is your responsibility to keep your house and environs clean and litter free.

Your refuse is your property until it is collected. You will be taken to Court and fined for disposing of your refuse incorrectly. You can also be evicted from your home for failure to dispose of refuse in a proper manner.

The 3 R's – Reduce, Re-use, Recycle

In recent years Cork County Council has established recycling centres throughout the County to aid householders recycle glass, aluminium cans, newspapers, waste paper, cardboard, plastic and textiles. You can reduce, re-use and recycle a large proportion of your household refuse by availing of these "Bring Sites". Details of locations are available from Council Offices.

Rents



office hours with more specific queries in relation to your account.

How is my rent calculated?

It is calculated using the Differential Rent Scheme. Rents are assessed on total household income in a manner which ensures that the amount you are charged in rent is reasonable and does not lead to undue financial difficulties.

Your rent is calculated on the combined income of your household and it is a breach of your Tenancy Conditions not to declare all household incomes.

When do I pay?

The Tenant shall pay the Rent in advance, promptly and regularly every week.

It is the Council's policy to provide its tenants with as broad a range of payment methods as possible.

How do I pay?

Tenants must pay their Rent by :

- Standing Order / direct debit transfer to any bank account that the Council may nominate, or
- under the household budget scheme, by deduction at source from each social welfare benefit or allowance payment to which the Tenant is entitled or may become entitled or
- by rent card at the Post Office or
- via MABS

What if my circumstances change?

You should keep the Council informed of any change in household circumstances. For example, you should let us know when:

- A person in your household gets a job/loses a job
- A person with an income joins the household
- A person in the household is made redundant /in receipt of Social Welfare
- There is a death in the household
- There is a birth in the household
- A person leaves the household

- 
- A person reaches 18 years of age and secures employment/in receipt of Social welfare benefit.

You should notify us of these changes by contacting the relevant Housing Section and your rent may be adjusted following submission of documentary evidence of the change in circumstances.

A copy of the current Differential Rents Scheme is available to all tenants.

What can I do if I am unable to pay my rent?

The way in which your rent is calculated means that you should be able to afford your weekly rent. If, for any reason, you are unable to pay your rent, please inform the Council immediately. It is much better that you inform the Council of your difficulties at the outset, and try to avoid allowing your rent account fall into arrears. If you are in arrears, the sooner you tackle the problem the better.

Please also be aware that rent arrears on your rent account may jeopardise the Council carrying out non-emergency repairs to your dwelling and your eligibility for social housing supports as part of a social housing assessment.

How do I make an arrangement to clear rent arrears?

You should contact the Area Officer responsible for your area via your Housing Rent Section. The next step is to work out a reasonable plan to clear off the arrears and agree this plan with your Area Officer. Once you make an agreement, it is imperative that you stick to it. The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is available to advise on budgeting/management of arrears. The phone numbers for the Housing Rent Section and MABS are given in the telephone list in the Introduction to this handbook.

Will I be taken to Court for rent arrears?

The Council may apply to the District Court for possession of the dwelling pursuant to Section 8 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. If a tenant falls into rent arrears, the Council will write to the tenant with a Statutory Tenancy Warning Letter. This may have been preceded by less formal warnings. If within two months of this letter, the tenant fails to discharge the rent arrears in full or if the tenant fails to enter into an arrangement with the Council to do so, the Council may seek possession of the dwelling. The Council may also seek possession if the tenant fails to adhere to the terms of any such arrangement. Failure to adhere to the requirements set out in the Tenancy Warning Letter may also jeopardise the tenant's eligibility for social housing supports as part of a housing assessment. If the Council is successful in obtaining any such order for possession, the tenant will still be liable for all the rent arrears and may also be liable for the legal costs incurred by the Council in prosecuting the action for possession.

Moving Out

If you intend to surrender your dwelling we require four weeks notice in writing. If you leave, and fail to give notice, this will be taken into account if you re-apply for housing. All arrears must be paid in full. Your house and garden should be left in good order and be suitable for re-letting.



Estate Management and Anti-Social Behaviour

Once you accept an offer of a Property from Cork County Council , you become not only a tenant; you also become a member of a new community and a neighbour to others who live in that community.

We encourage all our tenants to become actively involved in the area in which you live, and we are always ready to hear your views and ideas on how your living environment can be improved.

If you live in an area where a number of tenants are interested in setting up a resident's association or a community or neighbourhood group, we will be happy to help and to advise and to attend at your meetings where appropriate. If you move to an area where such a group is already established, we encourage you to take part and help to make your estate an area in which you are happy to live.

The Council aims to work with our tenants to provide a good living environment and to build a safe neighbourhood for all our tenants and their families.

What is the role of the Estate Management Unit?

The Estate Management Unit is available to assist and support residents in establishing estate-based groups, attending meetings with the groups where necessary, and providing or sourcing any training which the groups might feel beneficial. These officers can also provide information on a number of grant funding schemes available through the Council and other funding providers.

Will tenants be involved in drawing up plans for their estates?

The Estate Management Unit will work with those communities who are actively engaged with the Council to develop programmes of work for their estates.

Which groups can get involved with the Estate Management Unit ?

The Estate Management Unit is available to meet with any local group across the County of Cork who have established or are keen to establish a community committee/ residents association.

How can I become involved?

We want you as a tenant to participate and have a say in estate management on your estate. Don't leave it to the Council. Join with us by working, through your tenants



association, to help make your estate a better place to live. We will listen to what you have to say, after all, you have expert local knowledge. If there is no community committee active in your area and you and your neighbours are interested in establishing one, why not find out more by contacting the Estate Management Unit Area Officer in your local Housing Office.

Estate Management and Anti Social Behaviour

Cork County Council implements an Anti Social Behaviour Policy and adopts a very strong position where acts of Anti-Social Behaviour are proven. Offending tenants and their families will have their homes re-possessed. Evictions will be carried out in **all** cases where tenants or members of their household are involved in drug dealing or allow their dwellings to be used for drug dealing. Tenants evicted will be regarded as having deliberately rendered themselves homeless and will not be re-considered for inclusion on the housing list for a number of years.

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act of 1997 defines anti-social behaviour to include either or both of the following:-

- *The manufacture, production, preparation, importation, exportation, sale, supply, possession for the purpose of sale or supply, or distribution of a controlled drug (within the meaning of the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 and 1984)*
- *Any behaviour which causes or is likely to cause any significant or persistent danger, injury, damage, loss or fear to any person living, working or otherwise lawfully in or in the vicinity of a house provided by a housing authority under the Housing Acts, 1966 to 2014 or a housing estate in which the house is situated and, without prejudice to the foregoing, includes violence, threats, intimidation, coercion, harassment or serious obstruction of any person.*

It is important that you report any criminal activity to the Gardaí, and not to Cork County Council as we have no remit with regard to criminal activity.

My responsibilities to my neighbours :

- You must make sure that you do not cause damage or become a nuisance to your neighbours. In particular, this means:
- No drugs
- No criminal activity
- No violence or threats of violence
- No persistent or continuous loud noise/parties
- Keeping your pets under control



How will the Council deal with tenants who engage in Anti-Social Behaviour?

A complaint of anti-social behaviour will be fully investigated in accordance with the Council's Estate Management & Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Complaints Procedure. Tenants who engage in anti-social behaviour will ordinarily be served with a Statutory Tenancy Warning Letter as prescribed under section 7 of the Housing Act 2014. This statutory Tenancy Warning Letter may have been preceded by less formal warnings. Failure by a tenant to adhere to the requirements set out in any such Tenancy Warning Letter to immediately cease the anti-social behaviour may result in the Council initiating repossession proceedings against the tenant in the District Court. In certain circumstances of very serious anti-social behaviour, the Council may dispense with the necessity to issue a Tenancy Warning Letter. In the event that the Council is successful in their repossession application, the tenant will be evicted from his/ her home and he/ she will be responsible for the legal costs incurred by the Council in prosecuting the action. A tenant has a right to review a Tenancy Warning Letter should they be aggrieved and believe the serving of same to be without merit.

What happens if I make a complaint about Anti Social Behaviour in my community or my estate?

If you make a complaint of anti-social behaviour about another tenant on your estate, the Council will follow a strict procedure, in line with the Council's Estate Management & Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Complaints Procedure.

All complaints are investigated fully, to allow both parties to explain their side of the case. Statements may be taken by the investigating officer to record the complaint. If the investigation reveals that the matter should be taken further, a formal procedure is instigated which may lead to a Statutory Warning Letter being served on the tenant. The recipient of a Tenancy Warning Letter has a right to review any such Tenancy Warning Letter should they feel aggrieved and deem the serving of same to be unjustified. The Tenancy Warning Letter may be preceded by less formal warnings.

If you feel that a neighbour is causing you a nuisance, you should try in the first instance to sort the problem out between yourselves. You can discuss the best approach with the Housing Department. The Council has adopted the position that neighbourhood disputes are a matter for those involved.



Vacant Dwellings

Vacant dwellings in an estate can become a target for Anti-Social Behaviour. If you intend surrendering your dwelling, you must give the Council four weeks notice. We can then make arrangements to have it re-let, and avoid any problems associated with vacant units.

When a tenant vacates a house, he / she must remove all belongings. In the event of property being left in a dwelling by a former tenant we cannot take responsibility for any damage to or removal of such property by others and cannot accept any liability attaching to such an occurrence.

Taking Care of Public Green Areas

The maintenance of each estate is a joint effort between the residents and the Council. The Residents are expected to maintain any green areas in a clean and proper state.

Drinking in Public Places

Drinking alcohol in public, in the vicinity of the house, or in the estate is a breach of your tenancy. The Council has adopted Bye-Laws Prohibiting the Consumption of Intoxicating Liquor in Public Places which includes housing estates. It is the responsibility of the Gardaí to enforce this law.

Vermin and Pest Control

If you have a problem with rats or mice or other pests e.g. termites/ants in your dwelling or garden, it is your responsibility to deal with the matter. It is recommended that you contact a reputable pest control company.



Emergencies

An Emergency exists if (for example):

- **Serious risk to life or health**
- **Imminent threat of the house being flooded by water or sewerage.**
- **Total failure of the electricity supply or an electrical fault**
- **A risk of significant damage to the property.**

If Cork County Council personnel are called out where no emergency exists, the full cost of the call-out will be charged to the tenant.

If you have an issue that does not fall into the emergency categories listed above, you should report it as soon as possible on the next working day.

Danger of fire in the home

You should follow this brief list of guidelines in your home –

- Ensure smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms are in place and operational.
- Always keep a fireguard in front of an open fire.
- Check flexes regularly for signs of wear and replace if necessary.
- Don't overload sockets. One socket per plug is a safe guideline.
- Do not store petrol or paraffin or gas cylinders in your home.
- Do not use portable oil or gas bottle heaters.
- Don't run flexes under carpets or rugs where they can be damaged.
- Replace blown fuses with one of the correct setting.
- Never hang clothes directly over cookers or hobs or in front of an open fire.
- Turn saucepan handles inwards on the hob.
- Do not wear loose sleeves while cooking.
- Use a thermostatically controlled chip pan.
- Do not overload chip pans.
- Never leave a chip pan unattended.
- Use proper ashtrays on a firm base.
- Check for smouldering cigarettes on carpet and upholstery, especially last thing at night.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Never leave children alone in the house.
- Keep matches out of reach of children.
- Have a plan with other members of your household to get out of your home in the event of a fire and pick a place to meet outside of the house.
- All gas and electrical appliances should be used and serviced in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.



- Christmas Time: It is very important that particular care is taken with Christmas tree lights and any lighted decorations.(plug out every night).
- Your escape plans should be rehearsed regularly and the means of escape from the premises should be kept free from objects that may hinder escape (prams, bicycles in hallways etc.)
- Everyone in the premises should know the correct procedure for calling the emergency services.

Last thing at night before bed, a night-time safety routine check should be carried out.

- Close doors to all rooms. (Don't open a door if you suspect there is a fire in the room.)
- Unplug and switch off all sockets
- Ensure the spark guard is in place
- Empty all ashtrays (Never put hot ash or cigarette butts in plastic bins)
- Ensure the escape route from the building is clear of obstacles
- Ensure the front/back door key is available

What to do if a fire breaks out?

3 OUTS

- Get **Out**
- Get the Fire Brigade **Out**
- Stay **Out**

Your first priority is to get everyone out of the house and then call the fire brigade, and most important: stay out, never attempt to re-enter the premises until you are told it is safe to do so by the Fire Officer.

If your escape routes are blocked by fire / smoke, go into a room, close the door and stuff a blanket or towels etc. at the bottom of the door to keep out smoke. Call for help from the window and await the arrival of the fire brigade.

Do not evacuate from an upstairs window except as a last resort.

What do I do if the chimney goes on fire?

Call the fire brigade. Close doors and windows to reduce the draught. If possible, move furniture and carpets away from the fireplace. After a chimney fire, you must contact the Housing Section of Cork County Council to ensure that the fireplace is safe to use, and, if necessary, repair the chimney and fireplace before using it again. You should get the chimney cleaned at least once a year.

Advice about open fires:

Use a suitably stable fireguard and always check that it is in position before going to bed. Secure a spark guard to the fireplace if children are in a room and never leave



them alone with an open fire or with matches. Avoid banking fires too high where hot coals may tumble out onto carpeting. Avoid placing mirrors over fireplaces as they attract people, especially children to come too close to the fire where their clothing may catch fire.

Should special care be taken with gas cylinders?

Don't store cylinders indoors and return empty cylinders promptly.

What should I do if my chip-pan goes on fire?

If a chip-pan catches fire, use a fire blanket or the correct extinguisher – or smother the flames with a lid, large plate or a well dampened towel. Do not attempt to move the pan or to use water to put out the fire. Never leave a chip-pan unattended. If you have to answer the phone / door, turn off the power and move the pan to a cold ring / hob.

Because the majority of fires start in the kitchen, you are strongly advised to consider buying a thermostatically controlled chip-pan and a fire blanket and extinguisher for the kitchen.

Calling the Fire Brigade:

Dial 112 or 999

When your call is answered you will speak to an operator who will ask you which service you require i.e. Garda, Ambulance, Fire Brigade, etc. Once you say you require the Fire Brigade the operator will transfer you to the Fire Brigade Control Centre. You will be asked a series of questions by the Control Centre Operator in order for the following information to be collected:

- What is on fire?
- What is the address of the premises?
- What is your phone number?
- Are there any persons in the building?
- Is evacuation in progress?
- Are there any hazards in or around the building?
- Other information as relevant.



It is not necessary for you to remember any of the above questions. It is, however, important that you:

- Stay calm
- Listen carefully to the operator
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Only finish the call when the operator tells you.

You are strongly advised to insure the contents of your dwelling. Should you buy your house, you should then insure both structure and contents of the house.



Protecting your home

Garda statistics indicate that most house break-ins are carried out on the spur of the moment. There are a few simple steps that you can take to prevent a break-in.

- Always close your windows and lock the doors when you go out, even if it is only for a few minutes
- Make sure that you do not leave tools or ladders lying about in the garden of your home
- Never leave keys near the letter box, hidden under the door mat or in other “secret” places. Thieves can usually find them!
- If you have to go out at night time, consider leaving a light on in the bedroom or living room. You might consider fitting an automatic control which turns on a light at dusk. Controls like this are available from most DIY stores.
- Cancel milk and newspaper deliveries when you go on holiday and tell a neighbour that you will be away.
- Never leave valuables lying around where they can be seen through a window.

Thieves may try to gain entry to your home by posing as officials or workmen. Never let a stranger into your home unless you are certain of his / her identity.

Take the following precautions:

Ask to see the caller’s identity card. All Council officials, including agents working for Cork County Council carry one and will be pleased to show it.

Take time to look at the identity card. Examine the photograph and ask the caller to spell his / her name.

- If the caller does not have an identity card ask them to call back later and use the extra time to check with the organisation they represent.
- Telephone the Gardaí if you are suspicious.

If you are unfortunate enough to be the victim of a burglary , it will improve your chances of getting your property back if you have kept the serial numbers of equipment and taken photographs of your personal property, and valuables e.g. bicycles, televisions etc.

Always Insure Your Household Contents

If there is a vacant property on your estate, let the Housing Section of Cork County Council know. Don’t assume that we have been informed – remember, vacant dwellings can become a target for Anti Social Behaviour.



Housing Options

Housing Loans

A person wishing to purchase or build a house, who cannot get a loan from a financial institution, may be eligible for a Local Authority loan. In order to qualify, the applicant must meet an income eligibility test, which takes into account the income of the principal and subsidiary earner.

Incremental Purchase Scheme

The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme is available to tenants of existing Local Authority houses from 1 January 2016. Amongst other eligibility criteria for the scheme, tenants must be in receipt of social housing support for a minimum of 1 year, have a minimum reckonable income of €15,000, not have engaged in anti-social behaviour and not have been in any arrears of rent or other charges by the Council for the 3 years prior to submission of the application to purchase. Some properties may not be available for sale – this will be determined by Cork County Council. Information on the scheme is available from the Purchasing Options Unit of the Housing Department.

Mortgage Allowance Scheme

A Mortgage Subsidy over 5 years is available to tenants who surrender their dwelling and take out a mortgage to purchase a private dwelling. Certain other conditions apply.



Ventilating your Home

Condensation causes dampness and mould in houses. If it continues, it can make walls, floors and ceilings damp and discoloured, and mould can grow on their surface. This part of your handbook explains how condensation occurs and what you can do to prevent it in your home. The Council cannot take responsibility for condensation and damage caused by condensation in your home, but we are available for advice on the prevention and cure if you need it. If you follow these guidelines, you should avoid issues in your home in relation to condensation.

Condensation

Why does condensation occur?

Condensation occurs when moist air meets a cold surface. The more moist the air and the cooler the surface, the heavier the condensation. You can use your house in a way that minimises condensation by affecting the moistness of the air and the coolness of the surfaces. We will explain this in more detail in this section .

When does condensation occur?

Condensation occurs more in the winter time. This is because the house's surfaces are colder, more moisture is generated within the house, and if windows are open less often, the moist air cannot escape.

Where does condensation occur?

Visible condensation occurs for short periods of time in bathrooms and kitchens because of the steamy atmosphere. It occurs in unheated rooms and in parts of rooms where ventilation and air movement is restricted. It can also occur in places you cannot see, such as in the roof of your house.

Prevention and Cure

The following four precautions are very important:-

- Keep moisture low in your house and confine it as much as possible to specific areas such as your kitchen and bathroom.
- Prevent the spread of moisture to other areas of your home, especially to rooms where clothes are drying.
- Provide some ventilation (e.g. open windows, extractor fans) to rooms where moisture is produced so that the moist air can escape.
- Provide heating.



Minimising Moisture Production

- Dry clothes outside whenever possible.
- Provide venting if using a clothes dryer.
- Keep the use of mobile gas or paraffin heaters to a minimum as they release water vapour and increase the risk of condensation.
- Keep cooking steam to a minimum by using saucepan covers and lids and avoid boiling for extended periods.
- Use an extractor fan when cooking where possible.

Prevention of Spread of Moist Air

- Your kitchen should be well ventilated. If you have an extractor fan, you should use it when cooking. You should also use it when your windows mist up.
- If you do not have an extractor fan, open your windows and keep your kitchen door closed as much as possible.
- Always keep bathroom windows open after taking a bath or shower, at least until the bathroom dries off.
- Do not use unventilated cupboards to dry clothes.
- If you do use your kitchen or bathroom to dry clothes and you have an extractor fan, you should use it. Also, keep the door of the kitchen / bathroom closed to prevent the spread of moist air outside of these rooms.
- If you have to use a gas or paraffin heater, make sure it is well ventilated and in a room that is sealed off from the rest of the house as far as is practicable.

Ventilation

The simplest way of reducing moisture content in the air in your rooms is to provide ventilation. This removes the stale moist air and replaces it with fresh air which contains less moisture.

In older houses, ventilation occurs through fireplaces and draughty windows. In newer modern houses and flats, sufficient ventilation does not occur unless a window or a vent is open for a reasonable time each day, and for as much time as possible while the room is in use. Too much ventilation in winter time may prove too cold and it will waste heat. A slightly open window or vent is usually sufficient. Ideally the top part of the window should be open 10mm or half an inch. If more than two people sleep in the bedroom, the window should be opened wider, particularly during the night.

If condensation occurs in a room where you have a heater connected to a chimney, you should have the installation checked as the chimney may have become blocked.



Provision of Heating

Heating helps to prevent condensation as it warms the room's surfaces. It can take a long time for a cold room to heat up so it is better to provide a small amount of heating for long periods than to provide a lot of heat for a short period. If your property is unoccupied and unheated during the day, its surfaces can become very cold. It would be ideal if a small amount of heating could be provided for most of the time.

All rooms should be at least partially heated. Condensation most often occurs in unheated bedrooms. If you leave a room unheated you should keep the window slightly open and the door shut.

- Rooms above a heated room benefit from the heat rising through the floor. Obviously in bungalows and in some flats, this cannot happen. Some rooms are colder as they contain gable or outside walls. These rooms are more likely to experience condensation. Some heating should therefore be provided in these rooms in particular. If a room's temperature is not kept at 10 degrees Celsius or above, condensation is likely. If a room is being used, it should be heated to 20 degrees Celsius if possible.
- Insulation is important to reduce heat loss and raise the temperature. However, even in a well-insulated house, some heating may be necessary in cold rooms with no direct heat input.

Mould Growth

The start of mould growth can be seen through the appearance of small black spots on room surfaces such as walls, ceilings or even window blinds. Any sign of mould growth indicates the presence of moisture. The moisture will most likely be caused by condensation and is an indication that the level of moisture in the room needs to be reduced, or that the heating, ventilation or structural insulation, or even all of these, need to be improved.

New Homes

New buildings can take a while to dry out and special attention should be paid to heating and ventilation during the first winter. More ventilation and heating will be necessary than in subsequent winters. Extremes of temperature should be avoided to prevent warping of new joinery. You should not use waterproof décor (e.g. vinyl paper on walls or ceilings) unless you have been given expert advice.

Extractor Ventilation

If you propose to fit an extractor fan or change the ventilation of a room which has a gas or solid fuel appliance connected to the chimney, you should get advice from the person or contractor who installed the heating appliance. This is to prevent the risk of drawing toxic fumes back into the room from the appliance.