

PRIVATE SECTOR TENANTS

A guide to getting repairs done



If you are a private tenant and having difficulty getting your landlord to carry out repairs, then the **Private Sector Housing Team** may be able to help you.

It only takes a phone call to find out.

The **Private Sector Housing Team** is part of the Environmental and Protective Services Department within Colchester Borough Council and aims to ensure that privately rented, multi-occupied and Housing Association homes are safe for residents to live in.

Some of the things they look at are:

Disrepair

Dampness

Overcrowding

Fire precautions

Lacking amenities

If you are a tenant and your home is in disrepair, what should you do?

If you are having problems with a privately rented property that you live in then your first action should be to contact either your letting agent or your landlord.

Any disrepair or problems?

First contact your letting agent or your landlord.

Their details should be on your tenancy agreement.

If you have had difficulties in the past in getting your landlord to act, then this contact should be made in writing.

- If, after a reasonable time (say 14 days in the case of non-urgent problems) the letting agent, your landlord, or someone acting on their behalf, has not been to look at the problem, or
- your landlord, or his representative, refuses to do any works, or you feel that they are dragging their heels in getting the works done, or
- you think the property is dangerous,

contact the Private Sector Housing Team.

Although they aim to act in confidence and try not to let your landlord know that you have made a complaint, this cannot be guaranteed and it may become obvious how they became involved with the property.

Normally an appointment will be made to visit you at your home to find out the extent of the problem, and to let to you know what can be done to help you.

What can be done?

Most landlords are reasonable people and look after their properties, as this protects their interests. However, if your landlord is ignoring your request for repairs, the Private Sector Housing Team can become involved to make sure that any necessary repairs are carried out and the property is left safe for you.

At first an informal approach is normally adopted either by phoning or writing to your landlord. However, if experience of dealing with your landlord or letting agent has shown that they use delaying tactics to avoid carrying out repairs then a more formal approach may be adopted straightaway.

If the informal approach doesn't work then the next step may be to send your landlord or letting agent a statutory notice.

To help find out whether the works are severe enough to warrant the service of a notice, an assessment of the property may be

'Statutory notice'

This is a legal document requiring your landlord to carry out works listed in the notice within a set period of time.

'Housing Health & Safety Rating System'

This is a formal way of evaluating any deficiencies and hazards in the property. The results help determine the extent of any statutory action that can be taken.

carried out using the Housing Health & Safety Rating System.

If your landlord doesn't have the repairs carried out, and has not appealed against the notice, then the Council may have the works carried out and recover the costs from him.

There may be times when the assessed risk is so low that the landlord cannot be made to carry out the works. In this case the following options may still be available to you:

- If you are in receipt of benefits then you may be eligible for legal aid to help pay for a solicitor to pursue a claim against your landlord, or
- you may be able to pursue a claim against your landlord at the small claims court. This is relatively easy and you can obtain information on the procedure from **Colchester County Court** on **01206 717200**.

How to contact the Private Sector Housing Team

Phone Colchester Borough Council's **Customer Service Centre** on **01206 282581**. **Textphone users** please dial **18001 01206 282581**.

Email us on housing.private@colchester.gov.uk



If you need help with reading or understanding this document, please take it to our Customer Service Centre at Angel Court, High Street, Colchester, or phone Colchester **(01206) 282222**, or **Textphone 18001 01206 282222**.

We may be able to provide a reading service, translation, or any other format that you may need.