

Know your rights as a tenant

As a tenant privately renting in the UK, you have the right to live in a property that is safe, secure, and fairly priced. While we hope that nobody falls victim to unreasonable or unlawful landlords, instances of both do occur. As a tenant, therefore, it is vitally important that you know your rights to ensure that you are not taken advantage of.

You have the right to live in a safe property

It is a landlords' legal obligation to ensure that a property is safe throughout the entirety of your tenancy. A safe property will:

- Have sturdy doors on entrances to the property, with properly installed locks
- Be equipped with appropriately placed smoke alarms on each floor
- Have a working water and heating/gas system that can be turned off in case of an emergency
- Be structurally sound
- Have properly installed electric and electronic equipment. Note that it is not compulsory for landlords to PAT test equipment, but you can request this to be done or do it yourself.

If at any point during your tenancy you notice something you believe to be unsafe, you should notify your landlord or letting agency immediately. Depending on the issue, they are bound by law to respond within a reasonable length of time.

You have the right to be charged fairly

As a general rule, landlords should only charge you for the following:

- Your rent (which is agreed before the tenancy begins)
- Bills (such as gas, electricity, water, and broadband)
- Any damage to the property that you cause
- Late rent fees
- Lost keys

Any fair charges related to damaged property should be performed at a 'reasonable cost' and should be charged by the landlord after the work has been completed. They can also deduct the cost from your deposit.

Conversely, a landlord cannot charge you for:

- Credit or reference checks
- **Cleaning (unless it can be classed as 'damage')**
- Maintenance costs

If you believe you have been unfairly charged by your landlord, you are well within your rights to challenge the request for payment. Note that such disputes may need to be settled in court.

You have the right of transparency

It is the right of a tenant to know the identity and address of their landlord. This law is in place because a landlord needs to be easily contactable in case an emergency arises. In many cases, a property and all related affairs will be managed by a letting agent. If you have the contact details of the agent managing the property on the **landlord's behalf, the landlord is not bound by law to give you** their personal contact details.

When you request the address of a landlord, they have three weeks to respond with their address (or the address of an agent/business address). If they do not respond, they will be liable to pay a fine.

If you do not have the contact information for your landlord or agency and there is an emergency, get in touch with your local authority. They will be able to aid you in locating your landlord.

You Have the right to live in peace

Another key right that is sometimes overlooked is the tenant's right to live undisturbed by neighbours. If you believe that your neighbour is being too loud (also called 'statutory noise'), you can report them to your local council (if your neighbour is a tenant then you may wish to report them to their landlord first).

If your neighbour is found to be guilty of unreasonable noise, they can be ordered by the council to stop. If they still persist, your neighbour could be given a fine of up to £5000.

We advise our readers to note down any instances of unreasonable noise that occur, including the date and time, as repeated offenses will make the council more likely to act.

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