

Health and safety at home

This factsheet looks at what you can do if your home suffers from problems that affect your health or safety.

Landlords have obligations when it comes to the safety of their tenants. It's usually best to report problems to your landlord first. If your landlord refuses to deal with the problem, you can ask the council for help or sometimes take your landlord to court.

Responsibility for fixing problems

Your landlord must ensure that the heating, plumbing and electrics in your home are working and safe, and fix problems with the structure of the building. Your home should be fit to live in. Private landlords must carry out electrical safety checks.

Ask the council for help

The council can help you if your home suffers from problems affecting your health or safety, such as:

- damp
- noise
- pests
- unsafe electrics

When you report a problem to the council, an environmental health officer should inspect your home. Explain how you are affected by the problem.

If there is a serious risk to your health or safety, the council should inspect your home quickly, otherwise you may have to wait for a visit. An environmental health inspection is free, but there may be charges for certain services.

You can find the environmental health service's details on your council's website. The service may be part of another section, like housing standards or housing advice.

What environmental health can do

The environmental health service can advise your landlord or order them to do the work that's needed. Sometimes it will do the work itself and charge your landlord. Environmental health can also give you advice about your options.

Damp

Damp can lead to health problems, such as breathing difficulties. It has many causes. Environmental health can find out why your home is damp and advise you what to do.

They may order your landlord to take action to remedy the problem.

Noise

Noise can affect your health, for example if you can't sleep because of neighbours playing loud music. Environmental health may be able to take action against the person responsible. Record the noise if you can. Keep a diary of when and how often it happens before you report the problem.

Pests

Some pests and vermin spread diseases and can worsen health conditions like asthma and eczema. Rats and mice can chew through electrical wires, increasing the risk of a fire or electrocution. Environmental health can find out why you have the problem in your home and decide who is responsible for removing the infestation. This could be you, your landlord, or even your neighbours. For more information see the factsheet 'Dealing with pests in your home' in the [Repairs & safety](#) section.

Take court action

Your landlord may also have to make sure your home is fit to live in. If it isn't you may be able to take court action against your landlord. For more information see the factsheet 'Is your home fit to live in' in the [Repairs & safety](#) section.

Eviction warning

If you live in privately rented housing, your landlord might start eviction proceedings if you complain or take action over a problem in your home. This is called 'revenge' or 'retaliatory' eviction. You must weigh up this risk. There is some protection against revenge evictions. See the factsheet 'Section 21: restrictions' in the [Eviction](#) section for more information.

Further advice

You can get further advice from england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice, local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice. If you have nowhere to sleep tonight, are at risk of harm or losing your home within the next 2 months, call Shelter Helpline on **0808 800 4444** for advice and information on your options.*

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



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Note
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