

Dealing with harassment

This factsheet looks at what you can do if your landlord or letting agent is harassing you.

Harassment is something that your landlord or someone acting on their behalf, does which aims to:

- disrupt your life at home
- make you leave.

You may be able to get help from the council or take your landlord to court.

Types of harassment

Harassment of tenants can take many forms, for example:

- disconnecting your electricity or gas supply
- entering your home (or room) without your permission
- threats or violence
- harassing you because of your gender, race or sexuality
- opening your mail
- 'confiscating' your belongings
- starting disruptive repair work and not finishing it.

Practical steps

To try and stop harassment, you could, for example:

- ask your landlord to stop the behaviour
- keep a diary and take photographs of what happens
- ask your landlord to put all communication with you in writing
- write to your landlord saying if the harassment continues you will contact the police or the council
- have someone with you as a witness whenever you see your landlord
- speak with other tenants who have the same landlord, they might have the same problem especially where you share accommodation
- go to an advice centre, the council, or a solicitor for help.

Any records you keep will be useful evidence if you have to take further action.

Going to the council or the police

Ask your council if they have a 'tenancy relations officer' (TRO), or another officer, to help tenants who are experiencing harassment or illegal eviction. It helps to involve the council at an early stage.

The council can speak to your landlord on your behalf. They can make sure your landlord is aware of your rights, and that action they are taking may be unlawful. They may be able to persuade the landlord to stop harassing you (an advice service may also do this). In some cases the council will prosecute the landlord.

Although harassment can be a criminal offence, it can be difficult to get the police to help you. The police can misunderstand the law and what responsibilities they have in cases of harassment of tenants. They may come to your home to prevent a breach of the peace taking place.

Taking your landlord to court

The council or police can prosecute a landlord in the criminal courts. Your landlord could be fined or imprisoned.

You can also take action yourself against your landlord in the county court. You can use the county court to get an injunction to order the harassment to stop, and to get damages as compensation. You normally need a solicitor to help you. Contact Civil Legal Advice on **0345 3454 345** to see if you can get legal aid.

Eviction warning

Taking action may provoke the landlord to take steps to evict you – this is something you must weigh up if you have little security of tenure, for example if you have an assured shorthold tenancy.

Further advice

You can get further advice from Shelter's free* housing advice helpline (**0808 800 4444**), a local Shelter advice service or local Citizens Advice office, or by visiting shelter.org.uk/advice or adviceguide.org.uk

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



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Note
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