Tenants’ Handbook
Your guide to a long and happy tenancy
Established in 1895, the National Trust is Europe’s largest conservation charity. Our core purpose is to preserve and protect historic places and spaces for ever, for everyone. We take care of historic houses, gardens, mills, coastline, forests, woods, fens, beaches, farmland, moorland, islands, archaeological remains, nature reserves, villages and pubs. With the help of our members, donors and supporters, we manage some of the most special places in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The keys in your hand are about to open a new chapter in your life. Whether you are moving in to a cottage or to the wing of a mansion, once you step over the threshold, you will become an integral part of a National Trust building’s story.

Whatever your reasons for choosing to be a National Trust tenant, this handbook will give you all the information and support you need to build a constructive and fair tenant-landlord relationship.

In these pages you will find the responsibilities for the upkeep of your place – our responsibilities and yours; the legal obligations of all parties signed up to the agreement; who to call for advice; some real life stories of people who are enjoying their National Trust tenancy, and some hints and tips to help you make the most of your new home.

Welcome!
a guide to short term lets tenancies

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The National Trust as a landlord

Your property is one of around 5,000 houses and cottages we own and rent out. Many of these places are on larger estates that we have acquired. Sometimes they include entire villages that were once homes for estate workers.

The buildings that we let on residential tenancies form a significant total of the number of buildings that we own and care for.

The Trust is a conservation charity, not a social housing provider and the income from the homes we let plays an essential part in funding our work to look after special places and give wonderful experiences to tens of millions of people each year. Our status means we are bound by the Charities Act to rent out properties on the best terms we can reasonably obtain.

As landlords we aim, above all, to be fair and professional. We recognise we have an important responsibility to you and to all our residential tenants. We want to provide you with as good a service as we can.

Our priorities are to:

• maintain all of the houses and cottages we own as part of our historic environment
• provide warm, comfortable homes at a market rent
• raise income for our core purpose work.

How we raise money

Donations & legacies

Membership fees

Commercial operations

Including property rentals

National Trust core purpose

Looking after special places forever for everyone

How we spend the money we raise

Coast

Countryside

Property
In it for the long term

We know that one of the things that’s most important to our tenants is the knowledge that unless there are unexpected circumstances or disputes, they can enjoy their tenancy for the long term.

A tenant’s story

Life-long tenant

Vicki Smith took over the tenancy of 2 The High Street in West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire in December 1968! After a few alterations and some decorating she and her young family moved in February 1969. That makes Vicki’s tenancy one of the Trust’s longest at 46 and a half years.

‘I have always enjoyed living in this house in West Wycombe,’ says Vicki. ‘The house, built in 1722, was just right for bringing up my two children. Even though it’s on a main road the house is close to a super school and part of a lovely community. We have loved living in the village with so much history and beautiful countryside all around us. Although I rent the house I have always treasured and looked after it as if it were my own. I am happy and proud to live in West Wycombe village.’

‘Although I rent the house I have always treasured and looked after it as if it were my own.’

‘Relationships that bring stability and longevity’

There are times when our plans for a rental property may change, but in the majority of cases, we are keen to build long-lasting tenant-landlord relationships that bring stability and longevity to our tenants’ life plans and to our own.

Improvement plans

As the National Trust’s Director of Rural Enterprises, it’s my responsibility to oversee our rental houses and cottages and to be sure they are protected as part of our historic built environment.

Our view is that a lived-in house is a cared for house, so we hugely value the role our tenants play in the ongoing conservation of a building and we strive to build good relationships. This means listening and making continual improvements: we know from a recent survey that we need to get better at communication and the speed of repairs, for instance, and we’re working on this over the next couple of years. We are also putting central investment into improving the quality of our properties.

TANT is one of the ways you can get advise/support on your tenancy. Their website is www.tantuk.org and they can be contacted on 0845 4633563.

I hope you enjoy your home and that this handbook helps cement our relationship.

Patrick Begg
Director of Rural Enterprises
As a rule of thumb...
for assured shorthold tenancies

Our tenants have high expectations of their National Trust rental property – the accommodation, the location and the community. In return, we expect tenants to look after the property as if we were looking after it, right to the end of the tenancy.

Making the property your own: what’s OK, what’s not

• Decorating inside is fine and, in fact, is your responsibility, as long as you return to the same state as when you first arrived (for example, purple walls returned to their original colour and glow stars peeled off) at the end of the tenancy.

• If you want to hang pictures it may be best to check the details of your tenancy agreement in case old or fragile walls should not be drilled or hammered into.

• Decorating outside is our responsibility. Your tenancy can give you more information. In the garden, please do bring colour to flower borders and plant pots, and sow vegetable beds.

• Please don’t cut back or down trees or substantial long-established hedges without our express written permission or help – we would prefer our specialists to carry out this sort of work.

Keeping your house in good order

• Inside we expect you to keep on top of maintenance such as cleaning, keeping décor in good order, ensuring any systems such as electrics or heating are treated respectfully and that you let us know quickly if you have any problems so that they don’t get worse.

Being a good neighbour

It’s likely you are going to be living in a small community where lives and living spaces are closely intertwined. We all know what we wish for from a good neighbour:

• an awareness of keeping noise to a minimum
• considerate parking
• clearing all rubbish away
• controlling pets
• a general willingness to co-operate with or join in community activities.

Safety!

Gas leaks

If you suspect there is a leak at your property, you MUST...

1. Turn off the gas supply at the meter
2. Put out all naked flames and cigarettes
3. Open doors and windows to let in fresh air
4. NOT use any electrical equipment, not even to switch them off, including mobile phones, light switches, intercom systems
5. Phone National Grid IMMEDIATELY on 0800 111 999
6. Wait OUTSIDE the property for the engineer to arrive. If the leak is severe, waiting inside could be dangerous.

Your Tenant Pass

You will receive a free ‘Tenant Pass’ throughout the duration of your tenancy. This entitles two adults plus accompanying children to enjoy unlimited entry to hundreds of National Trust properties. You will also receive a handbook to help you plan your visits, the triannual National Trust Magazine and free car parking at most of our places.
Settling in

Moving in checklist
✓ Contact all the relevant utilities suppliers to the house – gas, electricity, water and telephone
✓ Consider home contents insurance
✓ Transfer your TV licence to your new address
✓ Let your local council know you have moved so that they can update their records for Council Tax and any housing benefit you might receive

Decorations and repairs
Before you move in, we will have carried out any essential repair work and checked service supplies. We may need to do some other minor works once you move in, but will let you know before we start.

Once you’ve moved in you are responsible for decorating the inside of your home and for making sure you stay on top of the small regular maintenance specified on page 13, and repair jobs (see also section on repairs, pages 16–17).

The inventory
You will be given a ‘schedule of condition’ or an inventory to check through. This document describes the condition of your home at the start of the tenancy and lists the items, fixtures and fittings included in the tenancy.

It’s an important document because it records what we have jointly agreed to be the condition and contents of the property when you moved in. It will be used to determine whether or not you are leaving the property in the same condition when you move out.

Changing circumstances

Family size
Any members of your immediate family (Partner and children) can live with you, although if you want other people to move in, you will need to let us know. Depending on the number of occupiers, there may be implications for you and the property.

Household break-ups
If you are married or in a civil partnership and your relationship ends, both of you have the right to stay in the property while you are still married or civil partners. You should take legal advice on your ability to remain in the property as it will depend on your specific circumstances. Speak to us at an early stage so we can work with you.

If you are not married your rights will depend on whether the tenancy is held in one name or in both names.

Rights of jointly named tenants
You will have equal rights to remain in the property. We can transfer the tenancy to just one of you as long as you both agree. If you are not able to agree who should remain in the property this may end up being a matter for the courts.

Rights of single-named tenants
If you are not jointly named tenants on the tenancy agreement and the person whose name is on the agreement wants their partner to leave the home, it is their right to do this. We would advise you take legal advice on your particular circumstances first.

If you are making arrangements for moving out, please turn to page 29 for details on giving notice and leaving a property.

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Our aims

Our aim is to be a fair and responsible landlord, providing good homes for responsible tenants. We also want to do everything we can to build sound relationships with our tenants and this means being clear about our respective responsibilities and communicating well.

The details of each individual tenancy agreement may vary, but all tenancies are based on common principles, explained over the next few pages. Please always refer to your own individual tenancy agreement for the specific terms attached to your rental property.

Our customer service standards

As landlords, we want to:

- Treat all our tenants with dignity and respect. We’ll also treat people equally and fairly, making sure no tenant is treated less favourably than another, for example on grounds of race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability
- Communicate in a way that’s professional and courteous. We’ll call back promptly if we’re not available when you want to get in touch
- As far as possible, arrange any meetings to take place at the rented property. We’ll make sure we keep any appointments we make. If we’re late or can’t get there, we’ll explain why
- Make sure any National Trust employee or contractor who visits can show ID
- Investigate any complaint you make to us and let you know what we find out
- Continually review and monitor our services, to make improvements where we can.

Looking after your property

As the property owner and landlord, the National Trust has the right to:

- Review and change your rent and add any other relevant charges, such as service charges or re-charges (some properties are supplied by community heating systems, for example) in accordance with your tenancy agreement
- Enter the property so we can carry out repairs, inspections and general servicing
- End the tenancy agreement, giving at least two months’ notice to you to leave following the end of the fixed term.

In return, it’s our responsibility to:

- Respect the fact that the property is your home, leaving you to enjoy it without unnecessary interruption or disturbance, and consulting you if ever there are changes proposed to the tenancy agreement.
- Complete the repairs for which we’re responsible (see page 16 for details), as efficiently as we can.
- Look after the main structure of the building. In more detail, this includes maintaining:
  - the structure and exterior of the building and outbuildings we are responsible for, including roofs, chimneys and walls, and any access paths and steps
  - the outside decoration including, doors and window frames (not the glass, see page 13) and the condition of internal plasterwork (not including minor cracks)
  - drains, septic tank equipment, gutter repairs and external pipes
  - gas piping, electrical wiring and all their fittings, and the heating and plumbing installations and appliances we have provided
  - the water systems within the property, carrying out any measures required to control legionella (specifically when there is a change of tenant)
- If we know that there is asbestos in your property, we will advise you about its nature and location so you will know to avoid any actions that may cause disturbance or damage and how to report any incidents. At the start of any tenancy, we will conduct a survey of any material we know contains asbestos.
Who does what
Tenant's rights and responsibilities

Your rights as a tenant

• You have the right to live peacefully in your home. You should not experience any unnecessary interruption from the Trust or anyone working on behalf of the Trust.
• You cannot terminate your tenancy agreement within the initial fixed period unless there is a break clause, but if you wish to do so after the fixed term has passed you can serve a month’s notice in writing to the local representative (see page 29 or more details about what to do when you decide to move on).

Your responsibilities

In return, we ask that you:

• Look after the property as set out in the terms of your tenancy agreement (see page 24 for details)
• Pay your rent on time, on the dates set out in your agreement or any other dates we have agreed
• Don’t cause any nuisance or annoyance to your neighbours or to others
• Live in your home and not sub-let any part of it
• Let us know in writing if you plan to leave, giving us at least one month’s notice following the end of your fixed term and make sure the property is in good condition when you leave
• Communicate with the National Trust team in a way that’s courteous and co-operative. For instance, if you can’t keep an appointment, let us know; and make sure no-one in your household ever treats our staff or contractors in a way that’s abusive, threatening or perceived as harassment
• Give our staff access to your property to check its condition, complete repair or maintenance work, or discuss any relevant matters with you.

Looking after the property

As tenants, we ask you to:

• Keep the property clean and in good condition. In particular, we expect you to keep the interior decoration of the property in good condition; keep the windows clean, inside and out; keep sinks, baths and showers unblocked; make sure you regularly clean and de-scale any showerheads
• Replace glass panes; bath and basin plugs and toilet seats; fuses and light bulbs
• Keep the garden neat, tidy and well maintained. This includes trimming hedges at least once a year, not cutting down any trees, or making significant changes to the garden without our written consent. Your boundary of the property must not change
• Look after your own belongings and keys to the property
• Empty your septic tank. If you are not sure what to do, ask your local contact for instructions.

Please let us know if:

• We need to do any repairs
• Any material containing asbestos has been damaged or appears to have changed in condition
• The hot water/heating system is not heating up properly or if there are any other problems with the system.

Unless you have agreed with us in writing, please do not alter or change:

• The appearance or structure of the property in any way
• Gas, electrical or plumbing installations
• External aerials or satellite dishes
• The temperature setting of the boiler.
Staying warm safely

It’s essential that your property is safe for you to live in

Please take the following precautions when it comes to open fires and solid fuel appliances:

- check any chimney or flue has been approved by the Trust as safe before you begin using it
- make sure you are using the fire/system safely, having read and understood any relevant instructions, and made sure there is the right level of ventilation
- keep the chimney or flue clean and swept at the right frequency (see details to the right).

Keeping chimneys and flues clean

Does your chimney need sweeping more than once a year?

Don’t assume that it’s ok for a chimney to be swept just once a year – the recommended frequency depends on what’s being burned and how regularly you’re burning it. The National Trust will organise for a chimney sweep once a year; it’s the tenant’s responsibility to organise and pay for any additional sweeps or cleaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fuel</th>
<th>Frequency of sweeping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smokeless fuel</td>
<td>Once per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>Quarterly when in use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Use a qualified chimney sweep

If you need to use a contractor to clean your chimney or flue, please make sure they have the right credentials - either HETAS approved, or a member of one of the following bodies: The National Association of Chimney Sweeps (NACS), The Guild of Master Chimney Sweeps or The Association of Professional and Independent Chimney Sweeps (APICS).

Carbon monoxide poisoning can cause headaches, collapse, breathlessness, stomach pains, nausea/drowsiness, erratic behaviour, dizziness, visual problems, loss of consciousness, chest pains, tiredness and vomiting.

Unlike gas, carbon monoxide does not smell and so leaks are hard to detect. For your own safety, we strongly advise you contact us if your property does not already have a carbon monoxide detector in place and we will install one for you.

If you suspect there is a leak at your property, you MUST immediately:

1. Turn off the appliance if it is automatically fed with fuel, for example, gas or oil
2. Open all doors and windows
3. Go outside and don’t go back in until you know the heating system is fully extinguished and any gases have dispersed
4. If you feel unwell, depending on the urgency, call 999 for an ambulance, go to your doctor or call NHS Direct, explaining your symptoms may be caused by carbon monoxide poisoning
5. Don’t use the appliance again until you have had both it and the chimney inspected by a competent registered installer or chimney sweep, and they have confirmed it is safe.
Getting repairs done

Planned maintenance
We carry out most of our repairs as part of a planned maintenance cycle where we are responsible. For example, we like to update exterior decorations, and while we’re at it, we’ll often check to see if there is any other maintenance we can take care of at the same time, for example, repairing woodwork or re-pointing brickwork. We will let you know when we plan to do any routine maintenance and repair work, which we aim to complete to a good standard and with minimal disruption.

Gas and electricity servicing
If you have gas in your home, we will arrange for a Gas Safe Registered Engineer to do an annual safety test. Depending on the terms of your tenancy, we aim to do fixed wiring electrical tests every five years.

Other repairs
If something needs to be fixed outside this planned cycle, please get in touch with your local contact, letting them know:

- your name, address and contact number
- details of the problem and a sense of the urgency
- good times for someone to come to inspect or deal with it.

When you notify us that a repair needs doing, we allocate the job to a member of our building team and agree with you the level of urgency and timescale in which we will complete the work. We categorise repairs on our list as:

- **Emergency**: This includes issues that are a risk to an occupant’s health, safety or security, or may have a serious adverse impact on the building
- **Urgent**: This includes problems that cause an occupant serious discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance
- **Routine**: This includes issues that aren’t causing serious discomfort, inconvenience or nuisance to anyone, or causing any risk to the building itself. It may be that the repairs can wait until the planned maintenance work is due, if this timeframe is reasonable.

If repair work is not carried out as agreed
We will always try to do repairs by the deadlines we’ve agreed with you. If this isn’t possible, we will let you know, explain the issue and agree revised timings. If we haven’t done the work and haven’t let you know, please get in touch with your local contact (see back page) so we can look into the issue and rearrange the work as soon as possible.

If you have a problem that cannot be sorted out by the local contact, you can make an official complaint (see age 31). We are always glad to have feedback on your experience with contractors and their service.

How long does it take to get repairs done?
Our aim is to complete all repairs promptly. In many cases we achieve this, but there are times when repairs or maintenance can take a while to get started or complete. Our entire estate consists of around 25,000 buildings and many of our commitments are to repair sensitive or quirky buildings that require specialist care and attention. One reason is that the right experts (artisan-level stonemasons or thatchers, for example) aren’t always available whenever we need them.

If we expect a delay in any planned work, we will always tell you. In return, we ask for your understanding and a little patience.
Getting to know the history of your home

‘Vernacular architecture’ is the term used to describe buildings that reflect local styles and traditions, using local construction materials. Some vernacular buildings give us important insights into what life was like when they were constructed. We have conducted detailed surveys of the most significant of these properties.

If your property is one of them and you are interested in learning more about its history and significance, we are happy to share its Vernacular Building Survey. Your main contact (see back page) can give you the details.

Getting involved

If you want to get more involved with other tenants and your local National Trust community, speak to your local contact and they will point you in the direction of the nearest tenants’ association group. We welcome and encourage these groups as a way of dealing with any issues locally and independently.

Here are some of ways you can get involved if you are interested:

• Sharing information about the property you live in. Sometimes tenants build up an intimate knowledge of the property’s history and we’re always keen to learn from this and add to our vernacular building records. Likewise, we can share what we know about the legacy of your place if you are interested.

• Keeping up-to-date with what’s on through local or national Trust newsletters and the tenants’ space on our main website www.nationaltrust.org.uk/tenants

• For those of you who want to get more deeply involved, volunteering could be the answer - take a look at the Volunteering pages on our website www.nationaltrust.org.uk/volunteering

• And finally, don’t forget to make the most of your free National Trust Tenant Pass by visiting other Trust properties in your area (see page 5).

A tenant’s story

Every house has a story

Mark Connelly and Ann Connelly, who live in Village Farmhouse on the Dunham Estate pictured on the right, say: ‘We found the Vernacular Building Survey absolutely fascinating. The report answered all the questions we were asking ourselves about the house, its history, how the Dunham estate had evolved and how the house had played its part in that evolution. The old photographs, plans and maps are particularly interesting and are constantly shown to visiting friends and family. The survey is like a welcome to your new home pack – here is the history and here is the baton.

‘The vernacular survey is like a welcome to your new home pack – here is the history and here is the baton.’
The Countryside Code

Most of the properties we own are in rural locations and many of them are linked to agricultural activities, woodlands or common land. The Countryside Code sets out guidelines to help you respect, protect and enjoy the countryside. Your pets, for example, must be under control at all times and must not worry livestock or disturb wildlife.

Keeping pets

If pets are part of your family we would like to welcome them too, but we do need to make sure the type and number of pets are appropriate for the property you live in and will not damage it or disturb your neighbours. If you would like to keep pets, please ask for our permission in writing. We will normally give our consent, especially for cats and dogs, as long as you deep clean all carpets just before you move out when your tenancy ends.

If the animals become a nuisance or damage the property, we reserve the right to withdraw our consent for you to keep them there.

How does your garden grow?

For all Assured Shorthold Tenancies – unless stated otherwise in your agreement – we will carry out essential maintenance to walls and fences that we own around your boundaries and maintain the main path and/or driveway leading to your property.

You are responsible for keeping your garden tidy and clear of any rubbish as well as making sure you maintain any hedges so they do not overhang your garden or your neighbours’ gardens.

You are also responsible for any steps or fences within (as opposed to around) your boundaries and any secondary paths.

If you are concerned that any trees within the boundaries of your property are dangerous or in need of an assessment please contact us so that we can arrange any necessary work.

A great sense of space

Florent Parazza and Faye Bellamy, who live in Coleshill village on the Wiltshire/Oxfordshire border describe the appeal of their National Trust rental:

‘We visited Coleshill one afternoon, just in passing, and thought how quaint and pretty it was. We had a walk round the village and felt it would be really nice to live here. We particularly liked the peacefulness, the wonderful National Trust walks and the architecture of the houses really appealed to us. Our seven-year-old boy also loved the nearby woods and the large garden.

The properties have a lot of character and the gardens are very good proportions compared to other places nearby. We love our quaint cottage and have been able to make it our own and feel really homely.’
At the National Trust we are working hard to reduce our own energy consumption by 20% and make sure that 50% of the energy we do use comes from renewable sources. We aim to do this by 2020. We want our energy use to be as sustainable as possible and will reduce our reliance on fossil fuels by using water, sunshine and wood to power the thousands of properties that we run.

**The best tip to help reduce energy for household use is simple - just switch off! Here are some other tips worth bearing in mind:**

**Keeping warm**
Get to grips with your heating controls and if you can regulate radiators, set them lower in those in places that don’t need the heat so much. Keep doors closed.

**Night storage heaters**
These are great for storing heat while electricity is cheaper but do take a little practice to work out the most effective settings.

**Keeping the heat in**
Thick curtains and draught proofing around doors, windows, letterboxes and even cat flaps can all make a difference.

**Efficient electrical appliances**
Choose more energy-efficient appliances, keep the fridge full, only use the washing machine for a full load and boil enough for your cup of tea instead of the whole kettle.

**Lightening up**
Where possible invest in LEDS and energy-saving spiral bulbs. Within a year they will be saving you money. Allow as much natural light as possible into rooms by angling blinds correctly.

**Water**
You can make big water savings by using low-flow showers, turning off the tap while you brush your teeth and installing a water butt in the garden.

**Shop around for your energy**
Go to your energy provider and ask for energy saving tips and a more reasonable tariff. Consider using a ‘green’ energy tariff where power is generated by renewable sources - a little more expensive, maybe, but it is sustainable.

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**A tenant’s story**

**Life at Payne’s Farm**
Tim and Tina Maguire of Payne’s Farm on the Killerton Estate, Devon started out as assured shorthold tenants at Killerton. Rural surveyor, Daniel Fields, spotted a business opportunity for them and offered a ten-year business lease on Paynes’ Farm covering the land, the farm buildings and the house.

“We were looking for longer term tenancy security and the ability to make the property into a home, which the Trust is very good at letting tenants do (within reason!). One aspect of our tenancy is the invitation to preserve and develop unique dwellings, but we can also access the expertise within the Trust and feel part of a wider effort to promote healthy lifestyles in fantastic surroundings. We feel our own objectives are very in tune with the Trust’s. Our collaboration on the Payne’s Farm project has been successful so far.”
Tenancy details

England

In England, the most common of three standard types of tenancy is the Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

Assured Shorthold Tenancy

This agreement gives you a legal right to live in your property for a specified length of time. It also offers the landlord a right to take back the property at the end of the tenancy term should they want to. Normally, though, after the initial fixed period, these agreements run on from month to month as long as the terms of the agreement are met.

Assured Tenancy

Assured tenants have greater security than Assured Shorthold Tenants. These tenancies mean that as long as you don’t break the terms of the Tenancy Agreement, you can live in the property for an agreed period and after that, continue to live there unless certain legal conditions apply. These agreements will usually have started between 15 January 1989 and 27 February 1997.

Protected or Statutory Tenancy

If your agreement was signed before 15 January 1989 it is likely to be protected under the Rent Act 1977. This means that the rent will be set using the independent fair rent system and your agreement cannot be ended unless certain legal conditions apply. Once you have a protected tenancy with the Trust it will remain protected even if you move to another Trust property and sign a new agreement, although the rent may vary according to the size of the property.

Tenancy details

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the most common tenancies are Rent Controlled, Protected, or Uncontrolled Tenancies.

Uncontrolled Tenancy

This is the most common form of tenancy in Northern Ireland and is the one the National Trust will normally grant. It gives you a legal right to live in your property for a specified period of time. It also offers us, as landlord, a right to take back the property at the end of the tenancy should we wish to. Normally, however, an Uncontrolled Tenancy, after the initial fixed period, will run on from month to month as long as you meet the terms of the agreement.

Rent Controlled or Protected Tenancy

If your tenancy is a Rent Controlled tenancy, legislation controls the level of rent and duration of the tenancy. The law concerning Protected Tenancies is complex and if this applies to your tenancy we recommend you seek advice about your rights, either from a solicitor or the Housing Rights Service at www.housingrights.org.uk.

We also...

• Give you a Rent Book containing the specific tenancy information prescribed by regulations specific to Northern Ireland
• Where appropriate, we also give you a copy of a Certificate of Fitness in accordance with the Private Tenancies (NI) Order 2006, depending on the age of the property and the start date of the tenancy.
Paying rent

As a charity, we have a duty to make the best use of our assets. This means that in most cases, we will ask for a market rent for our rental properties.

How to pay your rent

Rents for our properties are collected by our central Financial Services Centre (FSC), based in Trowbridge, Wiltshire. Residential lettings are normally paid monthly in advance, on a day specified in your tenancy agreement. We collect all rents by Direct Debit from your bank or building society account. The FSC sends out an invoice about two weeks before the rent due date.

The Trust will treat any rent unpaid by the due date as being a debt and we will deal with it through our credit control procedures.

Getting help with your rent

You may be entitled to claim assistance with your rent from your local council. Make sure you claim any such help as soon as you think you may be entitled to it - any payments will only start from the day you submit your claim.

You are responsible for telling the local council about any changes in your circumstances that may affect your entitlement, for example, an increase in earnings, someone moving into your property or any changes in your other benefits. You are also responsible for paying back any claims that have been overpaid.

If you fall behind with your rent

It is important to pay your rent on time, but if you fall behind with your payments please get in touch with us as soon as possible to talk through the best solution to your situation. We will not turn a blind eye to rent arrears and, if necessary, will take enforcement action to recover any sums you owe.

If you are in debt because you are waiting for a decision on a claim for Local Housing Allowance, you should tell us and make sure you have sent your local council all the information they need to deal with your claim.

If you know you are going to have difficulty paying the rent or have received a letter from us already, contact us straight away on the number on your rent demand or arrears notice. We can put you in touch with professional, independent agencies who will be able to give debt management advice.

National Trust Financial Services Centre
0844 809 9910

Reviewing rent levels

England

Assured Shorthold Tenancies and Assured Tenancies follow a similar rent review process.

In most cases we review rent levels on a two-yearly cycle. If you have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, the law allows us to set the rent in line with other market rents for similar properties in your area.

When it is time to review the rent we will normally meet with you to look at your property and discuss any relevant issues. You will not be compensated or receive a reduction in your rent for doing improvement works without written permission.

Following the visit we will write with our updated rent proposal, specifying when the new rate will apply and giving you the opportunity to lodge an appeal. If you do make an appeal, the case is referred to the Independent Rent Assessment Committee, whose decision is binding and could set the rate at a higher or lower level than the proposed new rent level.

Protected Tenancies

In the case of Protected Tenancies, a ‘fair rent’ has to be set by the government’s Rent Service. The process is as follows:

• We will usually meet you, look at the property and discuss any factors that might affect the rent

• Then, we will apply to the Rent Officer asking for a rent review

• You will have the chance to tell the Rent Officer if you don’t feel this is appropriate. They may then need to visit your home to help them decide on a fair rate

• Once the Rent Officer decides the appropriate rent level and notifies all parties, there is one more opportunity for challenge

• When the rent is finally set, it will be registered and cannot be changed for a period of two years unless there is a significant change in the property during that time.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, we usually review residential rents every year, unless your tenancy agreement specifies otherwise. If you have a Rent Controlled or Protected Tenancy, a Rent Officer will set the level. For an Uncontrolled Tenancy, we can agree a new rent level together.
Your tenancy agreement is a legal document, which sets out the specific conditions of your tenancy. Please make sure you read and familiarise yourself with its details.

Conditions of your tenancy

The agreement has a set of conditions that you must keep. It is important that you read and understand all the terms and conditions. Breaking any of the conditions, even by mistake, will mean you could risk losing your home.

Breaking the terms of your tenancy

You could find yourself in difficulties if:

- You don't pay the rent in full on time
- You don't look after the place you live in
- You cause nuisance or annoyance
- You use your home for illegal purposes
- You threaten neighbours, National Trust staff or contractors
- You give false information in order to get the tenancy of a Trust property
- You do not use the home as your main or only home, unless we have agreed it in writing beforehand
- You do anything else in breach of your tenancy agreement.

Court action

If you do not pay off what you owe (the arrears) on your rent in the way we have agreed, particularly if your debt continues to accumulate, the Trust will start legal proceedings to retrieve the money owed.

In serious cases, where you make no attempt to clear or reduce the arrears by an agreed date, we will ask the County Court for an order to repossess your home.

If you do not keep to the terms in your agreement with us, you will be seen as being in breach of your tenancy. If you do not put things right when we ask you to, we may decide to take legal action which would involve you going to court. If the court agrees you are in breach of your tenancy, they may decide to terminate the agreement and you will have to leave the property.

Keeping the terms of your tenancy

Court action

When you decide it's time to move on, you can end your tenancy agreement by following the steps below.

It's important you follow these steps otherwise you will continue to be responsible for your tenancy and charged accordingly.

Things you must do

1. Give us at least one month's notice in writing of your intention to leave (after the end of your fixed term agreement or where you have a break clause, on the relevant break date)
2. Allow us to assess the condition of the property before you leave and have access to show prospective new tenants around
3. Make sure that everyone living at the property leaves on the agreed date – the tenancy will not end until everyone has left
4. Hand back all your keys before the tenancy ends
5. Deep clean all carpets if you have had pets living with you
6. Clean throughout, including windows, and make sure you remove all possessions and rubbish from inside and out. Make sure the garden, if you have one, is tidy. You will be charged if we have to clear or take away any rubbish from the property.

Things we must do

We will need to inspect your home before the end of the agreement to check whether any work needs to be done before it is re-let. You must complete anything that is your responsibility before you leave otherwise we will charge you the full cost of having this done. If, following our visit to check condition and the inventory, there is nothing for you to do and there is no rent owed, we will not make any further requests for payment.

Moving on

When you decide it's time to move on, you can end your tenancy agreement by following the steps below.

It's important you follow these steps otherwise you will continue to be responsible for your tenancy and charged accordingly.

Things you must do

1. Give us at least one month’s notice in writing of your intention to leave (after the end of your fixed term agreement or where you have a break clause, on the relevant break date)
2. Allow us to assess the condition of the property before you leave and have access to show prospective new tenants around
3. Make sure that everyone living at the property leaves on the agreed date – the tenancy will not end until everyone has left
4. Hand back all your keys before the tenancy ends
5. Deep clean all carpets if you have had pets living with you
6. Clean throughout, including windows, and make sure you remove all possessions and rubbish from inside and out. Make sure the garden, if you have one, is tidy. You will be charged if we have to clear or take away any rubbish from the property.

Things we must do

We will need to inspect your home before the end of the agreement to check whether any work needs to be done before it is re-let. You must complete anything that is your responsibility before you leave otherwise we will charge you the full cost of having this done. If, following our visit to check condition and the inventory, there is nothing for you to do and there is no rent owed, we will not make any further requests for payment.
Your feedback

We are always really pleased to hear what you think and welcome your ideas on what else we could do to provide our tenants with a good service.

We are particularly keen to hear about:
- Our policies and procedures
- Any ideas or issues that affect a group of tenants and residents
- Improvements we can make to our service
- How we manage our properties and maintenance
- What services you need as a tenant
- How we can improve the range of services we offer

When things don’t go well

We always strive to give our tenants an excellent service, but sometimes things do go wrong. When this happens, we want to put mistakes right as quickly as possible, and learn from them.

What is a complaint?
We define a ‘complaint’ as anything about any aspect of a tenant’s relationship with the National Trust that is unsatisfactory, including the standard of our service and the behaviour of our staff or contractors. If you are unhappy with something, please make the complaint within a reasonable timescale.

What is not a complaint?
We will not normally consider investigating a complaint about an issue more than six months old. Neither will we regard a first request for a service, such as a repair, as a complaint. A case becomes a complaint when we have not carried out the service you asked for, or we have completed it inadequately.

Who to complain to
Your home will be linked to a local National Trust property that’s open to visitors. The General Manager in charge of this property is the person you will need to make your complaint to, either by letter, email, or arranging to see them in person. If you are not sure which is your local property, please call your local contact.

If you do need to make a complaint, please try to make the facts of your complaint clear and comprehensive. If you think it would help, ask a family member or friend for their support throughout the complaints process.

The process we follow
1. We will do our very best to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible (although some more complex issues may need a significant amount of time to investigate thoroughly). The General Manager in your area has considerable authority and can usually settle most issues.
2. Once we receive your complaint, we will write to you to acknowledge this within 10 working days.
3. We aim to get back to you with a full response within a further 15 working days. If we can’t resolve the issue within this time frame, we’ll write to you to explain the situation and give you an estimate of when we expect to resolve the issue.
4. We will also explain what to do if you are not satisfied with the outcome of our investigation, with details of how to take your complaint to a higher level.

Legal and insurance claims
If your complaint could lead to a legal claim being made against us or to a claim on our insurance policy, it’s likely our legal advisers or insurers will deal with the issue, and so this will fall outside of the complaints process listed above.

For more information please go to http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/tenant-complaint-procedure

This process may be reviewed and change
Getting in touch

Your personal contact
If you need to discuss anything in connection with your tenancy agreement or the property you rent from us, please get in touch with:

Address
Phone
Email

Your emergency out of hours contact is:

Your Rural Surveyor or Estate Manager should be able to deal with the majority of your questions.
If you need to contact the central National Trust team for any reason, you will find them at the Head Office in Swindon.

The National Trust
Heelis
Kemble Drive
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN2 2NA
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
01793 817400

Coming soon, one number for all tenant repairs
Plans are in place to introduce a new centralised number for tenants to report repair requirements