

Tenant Handbook

August 2019



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Disclaimer: All efforts have been made to ensure this document and information contained therein is accurate. We will update as new and updated information, regulation and legalisation become available

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Welcome message

Dear Tenant,

I am delighted to welcome you to your new home and hope this is the start of an exciting new chapter for you and your family.

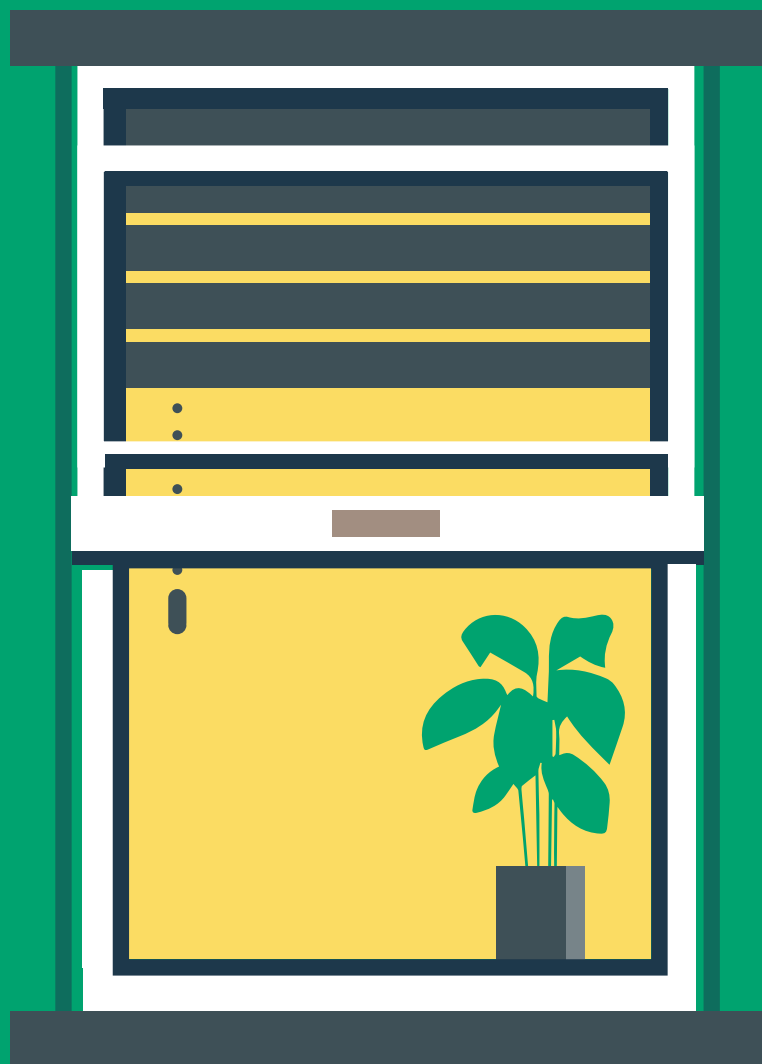
Our vision in Respond is that every family and individual in Ireland will have high-quality housing as part of a vibrant and caring community. This handbook provides you with some information about being a Respond tenant and how we will support you in your tenancy. It also clarifies the responsibilities of Respond as your landlord, and you as our tenant.

Please take time to familiarise yourself with your handbook and hopefully it will become a valuable resource for you.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your tenancy, your Tenant Relations Officer (TRO) will be available to speak with you at your convenience.

Wishing you and your family every happiness in your new home.

Declan Dunne
CEO, Respond





About Respond

Respond, as a not for profit housing association, is committed to playing our part in addressing Ireland’s current housing and homelessness crisis. Over our 36 year history, Respond has built more than 5,000 social houses.

Our mission is to expand and improve the housing services we provide, all the while maintaining our focus on the alleviation of poverty. We strive to contribute to an Ireland where everyone can have a home to call their own and where individuals, families and communities are empowered to reach their full potential.

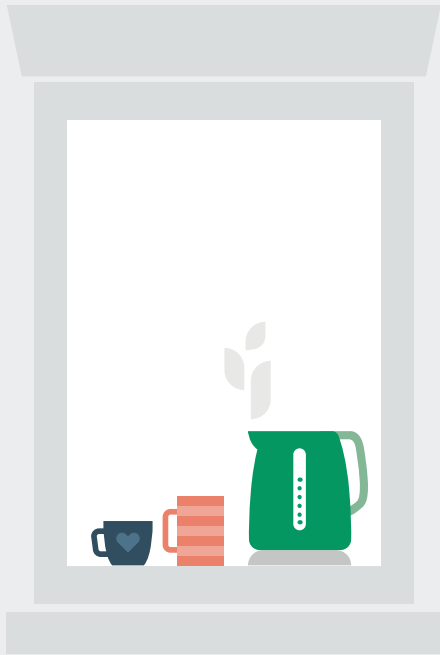
We work in partnership with central Government, local authorities, private developers and other Approved Housing Bodies and housing charities. We are focused on finding practical solutions to the crisis, delivering more homes and maintaining comfortable homes for existing tenants.

The motto of our logo reflects both our history and our plans for the future. *“Building homes and improving lives”* will be our watchwords to keep us on track and remind us of why we do the work we do.



The logo – a house within a stylised thumbprint – represents each individual’s need for a home as a human being and for pathways to the wider community. We will continue to pioneer new models, to forge new partnerships, to deliver the best services we can and to learn and adapt as we work to ensure that our impact is demonstrable and real.

Respond is proactively responding to the housing and homelessness crisis in Ireland by providing real on-the-ground solutions, delivering social and affordable homes, addressing family homelessness and supporting people in the homes and accommodation we provide.



Welcome to your new home

We at Respond welcome you and your family to your new home. We hope that you will be able to create a happy home, where you and your family feel safe and secure. Whilst this is a happy occasion we know also that it can be stressful and costly. We are here to offer you assistance and advice where we can to make your move as smooth as possible.





Some important things to remember:

- There will be extra costs expected during and after the move. Make a list of what costs you will incur; setting yourself a budget and stick to it. Decide what items you will need to buy, decide what is essential and what can wait, shop around and don't panic buy.
- Make the necessary arrangements to contact your utility companies and have connections and bills transferred into your own name. It is up to you to ensure that accounts are in your name.
- Make arrangements to organise your telephone, broadband and TV connections. Please note that there are restrictions on aerials and satellite dishes so please check with your Tenant Relations Officer before connection.



- Notify An Post of your new address and ensure that your mail is forwarded from previous address.
- Organise your household refuse collection.
- Find out where the stopcock is in your new home so that in case of a water leak you will know how to turn off the water. This will help minimise possible damage.
- Arrange contents insurance. Respond will have the structure of your property insured but it is up to you to

- arrange the necessary insurance for your contents.
- Don't forget to give notice to your landlord if you are already living in rented accommodation.

Handy hints for packing:

- Before you move try to throw out as much as possible this will give you less to pack.
- Make sure you have plenty of packing boxes and bubble wrap.
- Don't put too much in each box; this will make it easier to carry.
- Pack heavier items at bottom of box.
- Make sure all your valuables are well wrapped.
- Start packing the out of season items.
- Create a valuables box.
- Keep all parts or pairs of things together.
- Label all boxes and keep a list of what is in each box.
- Pack a first night survival box to include the kettle, teabags, mobile phone and chargers, toilet paper, light bulbs, rubbish bags, cleaning items.

You and Your Tenancy Agreement

Your Tenancy Agreement is a legally binding contract between you and Respond. Prior to occupation every tenant is required to sign a Tenancy Agreement. Respond will also sign this agreement. It sets out the responsibilities of both parties to the agreement (you and Respond). It sets out the responsibilities of both parties to the agreement (you and Respond).

You should fully understand your agreement before you sign it. Respond staff will explain it to you as part of your pre-tenancy induction. You are also advised to seek impartial advice if you require further clarification on any aspect of the agreement. You should keep your signed copy in a safe place for future reference.

Your Tenancy Agreement allows you and those members of your family, named on it, the right to live in the property as your home. Your neighbours will also have signed an agreement for their home and will have the same obligations as you.

What are Respond's responsibilities to our tenants?

1. To maintain our properties to a high standard.
2. To carry out repairs to the property that are our responsibility in a timely manner.
3. Endeavour to facilitate your peaceful enjoyment of your home.
4. To keep to the terms of the Tenancy Agreement.
5. Address nuisance and anti-social behaviour and take appropriate action against anyone who persists in engaging in anti-social behaviour.
6. To set your rent in accordance with the relevant rent scheme and to send you regular statements of your rent account.
7. To undertake a minimum of one property inspection per year.

8. To register your tenancy with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and advise you about your rights.
9. To insure the structure of the property.
10. To ensure that you can easily access our services and our staff when you have queries, information requests or issues.

What are your responsibilities to Respond?

1. To keep to the terms of the Tenancy Agreement.
2. To keep your home and garden in a clean and tidy condition.
3. To pay your rent on time.
4. To provide income details of all members of your household each year and when requested to do so.
5. Not sublet your property or any part of it.

6. Not operate a business from your property.
7. To ensure the property is your main place of residence.
8. Not to give your tenancy to anyone else.
9. To give the required notice if you wish to leave the property.
10. Not to carry out structural alterations or improvements to your home without first getting written permission from Respond.
11. To respect your neighbours.
12. To take responsibility for the actions of everyone residing in your home as well as any visitors.
13. Not to cause nuisance, engage in anti-social behaviour or harass your neighbours (examples are listed below)
14. To allow access to Respond staff or its agents to your home.
15. To dispose of all household rubbish in an appropriate manner.

If you do not keep the terms of the Tenancy Agreement it can result in Respond taking action against you which could result in you losing your home.



Examples of nuisance behaviour

- Playing loud music.
- Arguing and door slamming, particularly in apartments.
- Dog barking and fouling in common areas.
- Dumping of rubbish around the estate.
- Playing ball games close to someone else's home and playing the ball up against a wall.
- Vacuuming, using washing machines and drilling at unsocial hours.

Harassment includes:

- Racist or sexist behaviour or language.
- Using or threatening to use violence.
- Using abusive or insulting words or behaviour towards another tenant.
- Damaging or threatening to damage another person's name, home or possessions.
- Writing threatening, abusive or insulting letters or graffiti in common areas.
- Doing anything that interferes with the peace and comfort of other people on your estate or in your neighbourhood.

Criminal behaviour:

- Selling of drugs.
- Harassment of other tenants.



Rent



It is your responsibility to pay the rent weekly in advance, in accordance with the conditions of your tenancy.

If you have a joint tenancy, both parties are equally responsible for payment of rent.

The rent money we receive is very important as this income allows for the delivery of an effective and efficient housing management and maintenance service.

On most Respond estates a 'differential rent' applies, which is calculated on the basis of your household income. Local Authority differential rent schemes may apply depending on whether we own the estate or lease houses from the local authority.

Rents under the Capital Assistance Scheme

A number of our estates have a fixed rent where they are funded by the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS). This is specifically used to provide homes for people with special needs, including people who are elderly, people with disabilities and people who were formerly homeless. The income-based rent assessment does not apply and rent is set by Respond based on the cost of managing and maintaining the property. All tenants pay a minimum rent, Rent Supplement is available to those tenants who cannot afford the full rental amount and is applied through your local Community Welfare Officer.

Confidential Income Assessment

A Confidential Income Assessment form must be completed by all new tenants prior to moving in and by existing tenants at a yearly rent review so rent can be calculated.

- The Respond rent year starts from the first Monday in July and runs for 52 weeks until the beginning of the following July.
- Your rent is calculated using the relevant differential rent scheme applied to your estate. This means that your rent is calculated by looking at the amount of income coming into your household and the makeup of your household which includes the number of people/children/dependents etc.
- The amount of rent you pay will be reviewed each year. You will be sent a review form. You must fill out this form and send it back to the Customer Service Centre.
- This process is compulsory, if you do not return the completed form a penalty rent will be applied to your account. You will be informed of this by letter. Any changes in the rent calculation will be implemented at the time of the annual rent assessment.

and at least 4 weeks advance notice will be given to you.

- It is important that you complete these forms correctly each year when requested by Respond and any other time there is a change of income or family composition in order to ensure that any such changes are reflected in your rent calculation.

Changes in household circumstances

If changes occur in your household composition and/or of named tenants occur during the year, rent will be reassessed from the date of the change. Rent will be reassessed if household income increases or decreases during the year. You should notify us of any changes immediately.

Rent charged will only be revised on receipt of evidence of the change in income.



Service charges

Service charges are financial charges to recoup the costs of shared services provided to a property, 'block' or estate. Service charges are set based on Respond's estimate of the costs of providing the services and will be detailed to you prior to taking up your tenancy. You will be notified on an annual basis in relation to any changes in these charges. Tenants of blocks/apartments (and any further identified accommodations) will have a fixed annual service charge, which is payable alongside the basic rent charge.

Service charges could include services such as maintaining common areas, caretaking services, ground maintenance, car parking, security, communal lifts and door entry. A breakdown of the service charge will be provided.



Deposits

Respond currently charge a deposit of €150 in all our CAS funded properties and €520 in our family accommodation. In advance of moving into a property the tenant must pay the deposit together with one weeks rent. The deposit will be held against any damage that is not considered "fair wear and tear".



Paying your rent

The amount of rent due to be paid is shown on your rent calculation form prior to the start of your tenancy.

Respond offer a number of different ways to pay your rent:

- Household Budget Scheme (direct weekly deductions from social welfare payment).
- Standing Order (payment direct from your bank account).
- Through An Post with a Respond payment card.

The Household Budget scheme is the recommended method of payment for those in receipt of Social Welfare.



Rent payment frequency

Respond charges rents on a weekly basis. The rent week begins on a Monday and is payable in advance. To change rent payment frequency, please contact your Tenant Relations Officer. To change the frequency the tenant's rent account must not be in arrears and all payments must be made in advance.

Payment records

Respond keeps a record of all tenant payments through our Active H housing management system. We will send you a quarterly statement, which shows what rent is being charged and what has been paid. You can also request a statement at any time by contacting the Respond Customer Service Centre by phone (01 8087700) or by email (info@respond.ie).

It is your responsibility to monitor your rent payments. Tenants are asked to keep any receipts they are given and to check bank statements. You can monitor your rent payments through our Tenant Web Portal "TIPS". You will be given details of how to access your account on the tenant portal when you sign your tenancy agreement. You will also be given a password that will enable you to access your account. No other tenant can access your details through the tenant portal.



Arrears

Respond will endeavour to ensure that arrears do not accrue. Non-payment of rent/a missed or late payment is a serious breach of your Tenancy Agreement. If this occurs, you should contact the Customer Service Centre or your Rent Control Officer immediately to regularise the situation. Failure to keep up-to-date with rent payments may cause you to lose your home. It may also exclude you from access to social housing in the future.

If you are finding it hard to pay rent or arrears contact the Customer Service Centre or your Rent Control Officer to arrange a Repayment Plan.

Arrears management process

- If you fall into 1 week's arrears you will be contacted by letter and invited to contact us to clear the debt.
- If arrears persist for 2 or 3 weeks your Rent Control Officer will call to visit to discuss clearing the arrears.
- Any agreement made must be realistic and reflect the income of your household and your capacity to keep the agreement. Any agreement made to clear the arrears will be in writing and must be signed by you and a Respond representative.

Continued non-rent payment will result in a case being taken to the Residential Tenancies Board for resolution and adjudication. This could lead to your home being repossessed.

Hardship clause

- Rent payments can be reduced for a limited time under the 'Hardship Clause' if exceptional financial difficulties arise.
- The financial hardship must be exceptional, unforeseen and genuine. In addition, you must provide evidence.
- Tenants should be asked in all cases to seek assistance from statutory sources, such as Supplementary Welfare Allowance Exceptional Needs or St. Vincent De Paul, before being considered under the hardship clause. Applications for reduced rent under the hardship clause should be made in writing.
- It is at the absolute discretion of Respond to decide whether the hardship clause should apply to individual's circumstances or not.

Helpful tip

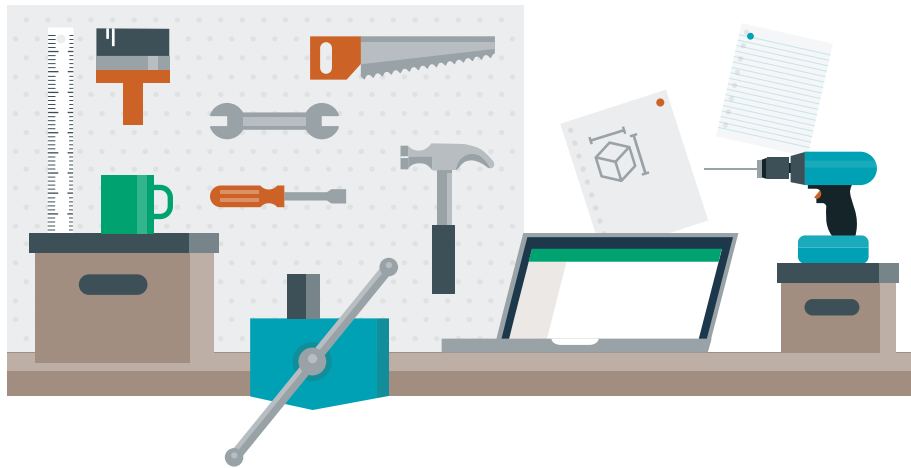
Finding it difficult to manage your money

If you would like to speak to someone about money worries or if you need advice on managing your budget, you could contact your local MABS (Money Advice & Budgeting Service) or log on to www.mabs.ie.

They provide a confidential and free service.



Repairs and Maintenance



If you need to report a repair in your home please check repair handbook to confirm if this is your responsibility first.

If you believe Respond is responsible for the repair you will need to:

1. Phone the **Customer Services Centre** to report the issue.
2. Provide the details of the maintenance issue.

How quickly will Respond carry out repairs and what must I do to assist?

The timeframe for repairs varies depending on the urgency of the issue, there are three categories.

Type of repairs	Respond's response time	Please note
Emergencies <i>(e.g. no heating during winter months, no water)</i>	24 hours	<i>You must be present in the property for contractor visits or must have another trustworthy adult to allow access</i>
Urgent	3 Days	<i>You must confirm correct contact details and arrange to be at the property for contractor visit</i>
Routine	20 Days	<i>Routine call out would be for non-emergencies i.e. dripping tap, then you will be notified in advance of contractor visit</i>

When should I contact emergency 'out of hours' service?

You should use the emergency numbers

- If there is major damage caused to the property.
 - If the damage causes a risk to life or safety.
- The emergency number should only be used if there is potential danger to life or structural damage to your home.

What will happen:



1 Give timeframes on expected completion of repair.



2 Send text message with contractor's details carrying out the repair i.e. name of contractor and contact number.



3 The contractor assigned by Respond will be issued with a timeframe for repair completion and must abide by these dates.



4 Contractors will make contact directly with you to arrange a suitable appointment for the maintenance call out.

Your Responsibilities

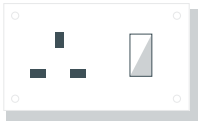


You must repair or replace any parts of the building damaged by you as the tenant, members of your family including children or visitors. This would include damage to the structure of the property such as installations, fixtures and fittings.

Tenant	Respond
External Responsibilities <i>(where the premises is one of a number of dwellings in a multi-unit development, these responsibilities will fall on the owners' management company)</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of your garden - grass and hedge cutting. Repairing TV aerials (excluding communal aerials). Repair and maintenance of any shed or outhouse fitted by tenant. Replacing broken glass and window panes. Replacing lost keys for windows and doors. Oiling window and door hinges and locks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure and exterior of buildings. Roof leaks/repairs. External cracks. Chimney stacks/pots and cowl. Repair and maintenance of gutters and down pipes. Repair any steps and paths that are an essential means of access to property. Repair boundary walls or fences. Periodically paint the exterior of the property when required. Maintenance of Communal areas. Lighting in communal stairs/balconies. Repair and maintain the main services such as water, electricity, heating and heating of water.

Tenant	Respond
Provision of services <i>(where the premises is one of a number of dwellings in a multi-unit development, these responsibilities will fall on the owners' management company)</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Means of supplying water, gas and electricity to the premises. Fixed source of space heating. Primary source of heating of water. Communal lighting (unless taken in charge by Council or the premises is one of a number of dwellings in a multi-unit development).
Internal Responsibilities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor plaster cracks. All internal decoration, such as painting of walls, ceilings and internal woodwork. Damage caused by you as the tenants, members of the household, or visitors to your household. The tenant is obliged to adequately ventilate the premises, to prevent excessive condensation in the premises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural repairs to walls, ceilings, tiling, skirting boards, down pipes and drains except where damage has been caused by tenants. Chimney sweeping. Damage caused by fire. Adequate means of ventilation inside the house. Repairing fixtures and fittings that were provided to the premises by the landlord.
<p>NB: Floor coverings should not be removed without prior written consent of Respond.</p> <p>NB: If a chimney fire is a result of negligence (such as burning incorrect fuel), the cost of repairing the damage may be borne by the tenant</p>	

If Respond appoint a contractor for damage as a result of tenant misuse you will be recharged.



Tenant	Respond
<h3>Electrical</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of light bulbs Replacement of batteries in heating controls/stats. <p>NB: The Tenant must ensure that electrical repairs are carried out by a qualified and competent electrical contractor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wiring, sockets and switches Fuse board/circuit breaker A fire blanket and either a mains-wired smoke alarm or at least two 10-year self-contained battery-operated smoke alarms. Carbon Monoxide alarms where required. If the Premises is part of a multi-unit building, the Landlord will provide emergency lighting and fire alarm system in all common areas and an emergency evacuation plan.
<h3>Cooking & Appliances</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for the proper installation and maintenance of fixtures and fittings, such as dishwashers, washing machines and cookers. All damage caused to heating units NOT caused by fair wear and tear, including glass fronts on room heating appliances such as stoves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Servicing of gas and oil central heating. Repair of heating units defective due to fair wear and tear. Replacement of defective fire backs (fire place).



Tenant	Respond
<h3>Plumbing & Heating</h3>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearing of rainwater and surface water gullies. Clearing of blockages from waste pipes from bath and sink. Taking reasonable steps to prevent pipes freezing during winter months. Preventing drains from becoming blocked. You will be recharged for any wipes, nappies or excess toilet paper causing a blockage. You are required to allow contractor access to property for required maintenance work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repair or replacement of toilet cisterns defective through fair wear and tear. Repair of water storage tank & repair of stopcock. Repairs to boilers and hot water cylinder Maintenance of external waste pipes and drains. Tap repairs (but NOT tap washers). Burst pipe repairs. Servicing of boilers. Heating/Hot water pumps and timers. Radiators. Electric shower (unit only). Sinks, baths and wash hand basins. Toilet bowl and cistern. Repairs to burst pipes (except where the premises is one of a number of dwellings in a multi-unit development)

Customer Service Centre

Our National Customer Service Centre (CSC) is based in Waterford but takes calls from customers all over the country.

Please call the Customer Service Centre (CSC) as the first point of contact when you need to contact Respond on any matter.

All post and emails will be directed to the CSC for distribution.

Our team of advisors will arrange repairs, answers questions regarding rent and will handle other queries regarding your tenancy and estate.

- The Customer Service Centre (CSC) advisors aim to deal with the majority of calls at first point of contact.
- We will keep a record of your call on the Respond system. This information is kept so that calls can be dealt with as efficiently as possible, all information is kept private and confidential in line with GDPR.
- There is no automated service or lengthy waiting messages times. The call will be answered as soon as possible by the Contact Service Centre Advisors. However, if the lines are busy, you have an option to leave a voicemail and an advisor will call you back.
- We aim to answer 80% of calls within 20 seconds, calls will be returned to all voicemails received the same day.



For emergencies when the Customer Service Centre is closed (e.g. in the evenings or weekends) you contact the same number and speak to our out of hours team.

How can you contact us?

Phone numbers:

051-840200 / 01-8087700

Email address:

Info@respond.ie

08:30 - 17:30

Monday to Friday

Out of Hours Contact Number:

051-840200 / 01-8087700

Local Office

Your Tenant Relations Officer will advise you of his/her working hours and how to contact them.

Tenant Relations Officers carry out visits to tenant's homes. You can make an appointment with them by calling them directly or through our Customer Service Centre. The Contact Centre will assist your Tenant Relations Officer by arranging repairs and handling general queries.

If the Customer Service Centre cannot address your query, your call will be passed to the relevant member of staff who will respond as quickly as possible.



Residential Tenancies Board

Following the enactment of relevant Sections of the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act 2015, all Approved Housing Bodies including Respond came under the remit of the Residential Tenancies Board.

This means that Approved Housing Bodies and tenants now have access to the dispute resolution services of the Residential Tenancies Board which had only been open to private sector tenancies.

As a result of the commencement of legislation there is an obligation on Respond to register all existing tenancies and Respond is also required to register all new tenancies as they occur in the future.

What is the Residential Tenancies Board?

The Residential Tenancies Board was set up under the Residential Tenancies Act 2004. It was formerly called the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) but its name was changed to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

It also provides policy advice to Government on the rented sector.

Services Provided by the RTB

1 Registration of tenancies

The RTB maintains a national register of tenancies.

2 Dispute resolution

The RTB provides a confidential dispute resolution service. You can initiate the dispute resolution process if you are a tenant, a landlord or are otherwise directly affected by a 'problem'.

3 Research and information

The RTB has published a number of research reports on issues in the private rented sector and it also publishes a quarterly Rent Index. It provides a wide range of information for tenants, landlords and agents, along with sample forms and other publications.

Residential Tenancies Acts

The Residential Tenancies Acts 2004 to 2016 deal with the regulation of the mainstream private rented housing sector and the Approved Housing Body sector. They set out the rights and obligations of both landlords and tenants in these sectors. They do not apply to certain types of rented property – see '*Exclusions from scope of Acts*'

www.rtb.ie

Further information on the RTB and details on how it can benefit you as a tenant:

Homepage:

www.rtb.ie

One Stop Shop:

onestopshop.rtb.ie

08:30 - 18:00

Phone numbers:

0818 303037

00353 766 887350

Post:

Residential Tenancies Board
PO Box 47
Clonakilty
Co. Cork.

Tenant Engagement

Respond has gone through many changes since our inception in 1982 as has the world around us.

We have worked to improve the lives of the many people living in Respond Estates around the country.

We don't always get it right, but we have learnt and continue to learn.

We realise that without you we cannot grow and improve and are developing ways by which you can realistically contribute to how we move forward.

This year we will be developing our Tenant Engagement Strategy. We are committed to putting tenants at the heart of everything we do and we will be seeking your input in this.

We, here in Respond, believe it is essential to consider your views with regard to the services and housing schemes we provide. We will be seeking your views and ideas on what 'Tenant Engagement' might look like and improve our services.

We believe that your involvement can lead to positive outcomes for residents and Respond resulting in new ideas, processes and procedures which will improve service delivery.

We recognise that we need to develop various methods of involving you and to give you a voice in what we do, and provide opportunities for you to get involved with us on whatever level best suits your lifestyle. We will be seeking your views and ideas to help us develop our strategy and action plan for the coming years. It is our intention also to involve the young people on our estates in this process. Once developed we will monitor and review it regularly with your help.

Is it easy to understand?

We welcome feedback on our Tenant Handbook. Let us know what you think. Is the information useful? Is it easy to understand? Would you like more or less information? What is missing?

Email us at info@respond.ie to tell us more

Respond Emergency Arrangements

An emergency repair is required when it is not safe or not possible to wait until the next working day to report it.

Examples include:



Gas leak



Smell of gas



Burst water pipe



Serious leak



Gas leak Central heating system breakdown during the heating season



Anything that would pose a risk or danger to a tenant or member of the public

Misuse of Emergency Number

Only emergency repairs are to be reported to the out-of-hours emergency number.

If you contact this number about a non-emergency repair then you will be charged a €25 handling fee by our partners who provide the out-of-hours service.

You will also be charged the full cost of any visits or work done by a contractor.

Please note: During severe weather conditions emergency repairs will be carried out when it is safe for our appointed contractors to do so.

When our offices are open:

08:30 – 17:30
(Monday to Thursday)

08:30 – 16:45
(Friday)

When our offices are open all repairs, including emergency repairs, should be reported to the main Respond number.

01 808 7700
051 840 200

When our offices are closed:

When our offices are closed (outside office hours, at weekends, on public holidays etc.) then emergency repairs should still be reported to our main number.

A recorded message will indicate that our offices are closed. You are given 2 options:

Press 1 to leave a message and we will phone you back when our offices reopen.

Press 2 to be put through to our emergency only line. Please see below regarding misuse of this.



1
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7

Safety in your home

What you can do to minimise risk to you and your family in your home.



Fire Safety

Fire detection:

- Test your smoke alarms at least once a week.
- Change the battery immediately when you hear the warning beep.

Escape:

- Know what to do when you hear a smoke alarm so you and your family can get out safely.
- Make an escape plan for your home and practice with everyone who lives there.
- Keep the keys to doors and windows nearby.
- If you hear the fire alarm, check doors with the back of your hand for heat before you open them. If they are warm, the way might be blocked by fire.
- Keep communal halls, landings and stairwells clear of furniture, bicycles, etc. to ensure escape routes are clear of obstruction.

If you discover a fire in your home please follow this advice:

- If there is smoke, keep low where the air is cleaner.
- Get everyone out as quickly as possible.
- Call 999 or 112.
- Ask for the fire service.
- Speak calmly and clearly.
- Give your address, phone number and details requested.
- Only hang up when the operator tells you to do so.
- Do not re-enter the house/ apartment, wait for the fire brigade.

Fire Prevention

- | | | | |
|---|---|----|--|
| 1 | Don't smoke when you are in bed, tired or on medication. | 8 | Use a proper holder for candle. |
| 2 | Never leave candles unattended. | 9 | Keep a fire blanket in the kitchen. |
| 3 | Don't leave the room when a chip pan is on. | 10 | Empty ashtrays before going to bed. Run the contents under the tap before you bin them. |
| 4 | If a pan catches fire , turn off the cookers, soak a tea towel under the tap and wring it out. Hold the wet tea towel in front of you and place it over the pan. | 11 | Do a fire safety check before you go to bed. |
| 5 | Don't use petrol or paraffin to light solid fuel. | 12 | Close all doors at night. |
| 6 | Never leave mobile phones charging over night or charging on soft furnishings. | 13 | Never wedge open fire doors. |
| 7 | Use a spark guard with open fires. | | |

Electrical Safety

- 1 Unplug appliances** that are not in use.
- 2 Don't overload** sockets.
- 3 Don't touch** bare wires.
- 4 Don't touch** any electrical appliance if it is wet – turn off the electricity at the fuse box and don't use the appliance again until it is dry.

Gas Safety

- Respond will service gas central heating boilers annually. You must allow access to our approved contractor to undertake the servicing of the boiler. You should never attempt to alter the gas meter, repair or service the boiler or heating system.
- If your boiler or heating system is not working please contact Respond's Customer Services Centre.
- Tampering with the boiler or other gas appliances can put you and your family at risk of serious injury.
- Respond does not allow gas cylinders to be stored in its properties for safety reasons.

If you smell gas, follow these steps:

- Turn off the mains.
- Open windows and doors.
- Extinguish any flames.
- Do not use a mobile phone.
- Don't switch on electrical equipment or switches.
- Contact Bord Gais immediately (even if your supplier is Airtricity or Electric Ireland).
- Bord Gais emergency number: 1850 20 50 50.
- Do not re-enter the house/ apartment, wait for the fire brigade.



Security in your home

There are some very simple steps you can take to help improve the security of your home:



Tips on how to improve home security:

- 1 Always lock** doors and windows when you go out.
- 2 Leave a light** on if you go out at night or use timers for lights.
- 3 Pull curtains** at night.
- 4 Lock your shed** and side gates.
- 5 Photograph** and mark all valuable property.
- 6 Do not leave** your keys under the doormat or other “hiding” place where burglars are likely to find them.
- 7 Never leave** valuables lying around.
- 8 Use** house alarm if fitted.
- 9 Fit** a good quality door chain and use it when strangers call.
- 10 Don't leave** strangers by an open door.
- 11 Don't let** anyone in until you are satisfied you know who they are and what they want.
- 12 Never** leave a stranger unattended in your home.
- 13 Telephone** An Garda Siochana if you are suspicious.

Apartment block security

To help keep you apartment building secure:

- 1 Ensure** that the entrance door locks behind you.
- 2 Never leave** the entrance door propped open.
- 3 Try not to let** people follow you into the building if they don't live there – they should use the intercom to gain access to the apartment they are visiting.
- 4 Report** to Respond or the block managing agent if the main entrance door is not closing or locking.
- 5 Keep** all entrance, landing and stairwells clear to ensure there is a safe exit route in the event of an emergency.

Insuring your home

Please note that Respond insures the fixture and the structure of your home, we do not insure the contents. We would strongly advise that you obtain your own contents insurance.

For additional information on security see www.garda.ie > crime prevention

Being Winter Ready

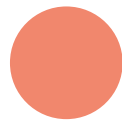
Weather Warnings are presented in three categories:



STATUS YELLOW: Weather Alert

Be Aware

The concept behind YELLOW level weather alerts is to notify those who are at risk because of their location and/or activity, and to allow them to take preventative action. It is implicit that YELLOW level weather alerts are for weather conditions that do not pose an immediate threat to the general population, but only to those exposed to risk by nature of their location and/or activity.



STATUS ORANGE: Weather Warning

Be Prepared

This category of ORANGE level weather warnings is for weather conditions which have the capacity to impact significantly on people in the affected areas. The issue of an Orange level weather warning implies that all recipients in the affected areas should prepare themselves in an appropriate way for the anticipated conditions.



STATUS RED: Severe Weather Warning

Take Action

The issue of RED level severe weather warnings should be a comparatively rare event and implies that recipients take action to protect themselves and/or their properties; this could be by moving their families out of the danger zone temporarily, by staying indoors or by other specific actions aimed at mitigating the effects of the weather conditions.

More details on Met Éireann's weather alert, weather warning and severe weather warning on www.met.ie which also has the latest national and regional forecasts.

You will find detailed information and advice for dealing with all aspects of flooding from the website www.flooding.ie. Further advice may also be obtained from the Office of Public Works by **emailing info@opw.ie**.





Cold and Storm Weather Advice

- Have a small supply of non-perishable, easy-to-prepare foods.
- Keep extra supplies of essential medication in case it is difficult to get to the pharmacy.
- Have an adequate supply of fuel for heating/cooking and if possible a suitable alternative should the main supply fail.
- Have a shovel and bag of salt to keep paths clear and safe.
- Have batteries for torches in the event of power cuts.
- Have candles and matches. Candles should always be placed away from draughts in proper candleholders. Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- Have a water container to ensure a supply of drinking water.
- Have emergency contact numbers to hand.
- Leave a key and contact details with neighbours or family if you are going away.
- Know how to turn off the water supply (usually under the kitchen sink).
- Check in with elderly/vulnerable neighbour/s.

Risk of burst pipes

You should be aware of the risk of burst pipes in cold weather and take reasonable care to ensure that water pipes do not freeze:

- Leave a light on in the attic.
- Open attic trap door to allow heat in.
- Leave heating on for longer periods at lower settings.
- Warmth offers the best protection against frozen pipes so keep your house warm.
- If you are going to be away for a short period and cold weather is indicated consider leaving some background heating on.

If a pipe bursts you should:

- Turn off the mains water supply at the stopcock.
- Turn off any central heating boilers or electric immersion heaters (unless you are certain that the burst is only on the mains supply pipe).
- Turn all taps to drain down your storage tank.
- If water comes in contact with any electrical fittings, switch off the electricity supply.
- Telephone Respond's Customer Service Centre to report the problem.
- Warn any neighbours who might be affected by water damage.
- Try to store some water in the bath or another large container so that you have water for flushing the toilet, washing, etc. until the burst is repaired.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I keep a pet?

Please consult your letting conditions as pets are not permitted in some developments. If you keep a dog it is your responsibility to ensure that your dogs are kept under control, are not a cause of nuisance to your neighbour and to ensure that any fouling is cleared up. There are some breeds of dogs that are not permitted. Please consult with your tenant relations officer for further details on the types of dogs not permitted. You are not permitted to keep horses, hens, pigeons, cows or other animals that may constitute a pet.

Q: Can I pass my tenancy onto my son or daughter?

There are no automatic succession rights to a Respond tenancy. All applications will be considered on grounds of merit. However, generally the person requesting succession would need to be declared as an occupant of the property, be declared for rent purposes for a minimum of 12 months prior to the application and considered eligible for consideration for inclusion on the local authorities assessment of need.

Q: If I want to hand back my tenancy what should I do?

You should firstly inform your Tenant Relations Officer (TRO) of your wish to do so and give the required notice period as set out in your tenancy agreement. The void process is then initiated and an inspection of your property will be carried out to ensure that it is in good condition and that no unauthorised works have been undertaken. You may be required to reinstate the property to its original condition if you have carried out unauthorised works.

Q: Can I buy my Respond Property?

No. The current government policy is that Respond tenants cannot buy their respond property, the dwellings are for rental purposes only. This is the same for all Housing Association properties. However as a Respond tenant you may be eligible for the mortgage allowance scheme if you wish to buy a private property or build a house and return your present property to Respond. Contact your local authority for further details on this scheme.

Q: How do I get permission to carry out alterations in my home?

Firstly, make contact with your Tenant Relations Officer (TRO) to inform them of the type of work you wish to carry out. They will request that you submit your request in writing setting out as much detail as possible with plans and details of proposed contractor. This request will be submitted to our property/maintenance team for comment and approval. They may then need to call to your property to carry out an inspection and to seek further details e.g. copy of relevant planning permission, if required. It is important to note that no work should commence until you have written permission from Respond.

Q: Can I plant trees or shrubs?

Yes, you can plant small trees or shrubs in your private garden. Please be mindful of the type of tree or shrub you choose and ensure that they will not grow to such a height so as to cause a nuisance to your neighbour or that their roots do not spread and cause damage to boundary walls/fences or your property.

